

BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1995

ADAM FOREPAUGH'S NEW AND GREATEST ALL FEATURE SHOW

PERFORMING ANIMALS.

ADAM FOREPAUGH ADAM FOREPAUGH, JR.

A TROUPE OF MARVELOUS PERFORMING LEAPING ENGLISH GREY DOGS & CLOWN CANINES.

THOROUGH BRED PACERS AND HIGHLY TRAINED ENGLISH HUNTERS TANDER BY LILY DEACON

THE PLAYFUL AND PUGILISTIC ELEPHANT JOHN L. SULLIVAN CHAMPION CIRCUS RING

THE WALKING HORSE BLONDIN AS SEEN PLAYING A GIGANTIC ROPE 50 FEET FROM THE GROUND

ELEPHANT MUSICIANS A FIRST EXTRAORDINARY PERFORMANCE OF THE VAST HERD OF RACHYDERMS UNDER THE TUTORAGE OF ADAM FOREPAUGH, JR.

AN EXHIBITION WITHOUT AN EQUAL ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH

BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

Vol. 39, No. 6

November-December 1995

FRED D. PFENING, JR., EDITOR

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

Stuart Thayer, Copy Editor

BANDWAGON, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society (USPS 406-390) (ISSN 0005 4968), is published bi-monthly. Second class postage paid at Columbus, OH. Editorial, advertising and circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221. Phone (614) 294-5361. Advertising rates are: Full page \$95.00, half page \$55.00, quarter page \$35.00. Minimum ad is \$25.00. The BANDWAGON is produced using a Macintosh IIfx computer, DesignStudio and Type-Style software.

Bandwagon subscription rates, \$19.00 to members and non-members in the United States, \$24.00 per year outside the United States. Single copies \$3.00 plus \$2.00 postage. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BANDWAGON, 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, OH 43212. Offices of the Circus Historical Society are located at 3477 Vienna Ct., Westerville, OH 43081.

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY-Fred Dahlinger, Jr., President, 451 Roblee Rd., Baraboo, WI 53913; Richard J. Reynolds III, Vice President, 1186 Warrenhall La. NE, Atlanta, GA 30319; Dale C. Haynes, Secretary-Treasurer, 3477 Vienna Ct., Westerville, OH 43081.

DIRECTORS: Div. 1-Fred D. Pfening, Jr., 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221 (Ohio-Mich.-Ind.); Div. 2-Robert Kitchen, 29 Damon St., Fall River, MA 02720 (N.H.-Maine-Vt.-Mass.-Ct.-Del.-R.I.); Div. 3-William L. Rhodes, 2528 Taylorsville Rd., Louisville, KY 40205 (N.Y.-N.J.-Pa.-Md.-D.C.-Va.-W. Va.-Ky.); Div. 4-Joseph T. Bradbury, 1453 Ashwoody Ct., N.E., Atlanta, GA 30319 (N.C.-S.C.-Ga.-Ala.-Fla.-Miss.-Tenn.-Ark.-La.); Div. 5-Guy J. Fiorenza, 4603 Crescent Dr., Rockford, IL 61108 (Wis.-Ill.-Minn.-Iowa-Mo.); Div. 6-Orin C. King, 5225 SW 20 Terrace #302, Topeka, KS 66604 (N.D.-S.D.-Kan.-Neb.-Okla.-Tex.); Div. 7-Joseph S. Rettinger, P.O. Box 20371, Phoenix, AZ 85036 (Col.-Mont.-Ida.-Wyo.-N.M.-Utah-Nev.-Ariz.); Div. 8-Michael D. Sporrer, 14537 N. E. 40th St. #H202, Bellevue, WA 98007 (Wa.-Ore.-Ca.-Hawaii); Div. 9-Dr. Gordon D. Brown, 7459 Saskatchewan Dr., Edmonton, Alb., Can. 76G-2A5 (All countries outside the United States.)

THIS MONTH'S COVER

The rare lithograph on the cover was used by the Adam Forepaugh New and Greatest All Feature Show in the late 1880s. It was probably printed by the Strobbridge firm in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The poster was recently acquired as part of the Tom Parkinson collection by the Circus World Museum.

BI-ANNUAL ELECTION

The election of officers and directors of the Circus Historical Society takes place at the end of odd-numbered years for two year terms. A ballot for the 1995 election is enclosed with this issue.

Only CHS members are entitled to vote. Your membership number must be shown on your ballot. *Bandwagon* subscribers are not entitled to vote.

Please mark your ballot and return it to election commissioner Stuart Thayer by January 20, 1996. Results of the election will be published in the January-February issue.

Dale C. Haynes has declined renomination as CHS Secretary-Treasurer following his excellent service since early 1991. Dave Price of Nashville, Tennessee, who served as secretary-treasurer previously, has accepted the nomination.

NEW MEMBERS

Harvey Dunn 3985
209969 Ventura Blvd., Suite 203
Woodland Hills, CA 91364

Robert M. Stevens 3986
73 Atherton Ave.
Nashua, NH 03060

Gretchen E. Hopley 3987
508 W. Magnolia
Ft. Collins, CO 80521

Todd M. DeBruin 3988
7321 Gwenn Ct.
Sylvania, OH 43560

Charles C. Fisher 3989
411 Hall Ave.
Harrisburgh, PA 17104

Mark Cosdon 3990
7 A Edward Place
Medford, MA 02155

REVIEW OF 1995 SEASON

There is still time to provide information, photographs, newspaper ads and newspaper clippings for the review of the 1995 circus season which will appear in the March-April *Bandwagon*. We are especially in need of material on little known small and indoor circuses

that played limited engagements.

Send information, photos and illustrations to Fred D. Pfening III, 1075 West Fifth Avenue, Columbus, OH 43212.

ADDRESS CHANGES

CHS members and *Bandwagon* subscribers are reminded that the post office will not forward second class mail to your new address.

Your change of address is returned to the publisher with a fifty cent charge.

A replacement issue cannot be sent and a replacement copy must be purchased.

DO NOT SEND DUES EARLY

CHS members and subscribers are reminded not to send payment for 1996 until the dues notice is received in April 1996. There will be a new secretary-treasurer and a new address.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION as required by 39 U. S. C. 3685.

BANDWAGON is published every two months at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221.

The names and addresses of the publisher, editor and managing editor are: Publisher and Editor, Fred D. Pfening, Jr., 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, OH 43221; Managing Editor, Fred D. Pfening III, 2240 Tewksbury Rd., Columbus, OH 43221.

The owner is the Circus Historical Society, 3477 Vienna Ct., Westerville, OH 43081. Known bond holders, mortgagors and other security holders owning 1 percent or more of the total bond: none.

The average number of copies of each issue during the preceding 12 months is: (A) Total number of copies printed, 1,700; (B) Paid circulation (1) through sales dealers, carriers, street vendors and counter sales: none; (2) mail subscriptions: 1331; (C) total paid subscriptions: 1331; (D) free distribution by mail, carriers, or other means, samples, complementary and other free copies: 6; (E) Total distribution: 1337; (F) copies not distributed: 363; (1) office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: 363; a) returned from news agents: none; (G) Total: 1,700.

Actual number of copies of a single issue nearest to filing date is: (A) Total number of copies printed: 1,700; (B) Paid circulation: (1) through dealers carriers, street vendors and counter sales: none; (2) paid circulation, 1,258 (C) total mail subscriptions: 1,258; (D) free distribution by mail carriers, or any other means, samples, complementary and other free copies 6; (E) total distribution: 1,264; (F) copies not distributed: (1) office use, left over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: 436; (2) returns from news agents: none; (G) total: 1,700.

I certify the statements made by me above are correct and complete. (Signed) Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Publisher (9-21-95).

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1995 ELECTION BALLIOT

PRESIDENT

_____ FRED DAHLINGER, JR.

_____ Write In _____

VICE-PRESIDENT

_____ RICHARD J. REYNOLDS III

_____ Write In _____

SECRETARY-TREASURER

_____ DAVE PRICE

_____ Write In _____

DIRECTOR DIV. 1

_____ FRED D. PFENING, JR.

_____ Write In _____

DIRECTOR DIV. 2

_____ ROBERT KITCHEN

_____ Write In _____

DIRECTOR DIV. 3

_____ WILLIAM L. RHODES

_____ Write In _____

DIRECTOR DIV. 4

_____ JOSEPH T. BRADBURY

_____ Write In _____

DIRECTOR DIV. 5

_____ GUY J. FLORENZA

_____ Write In _____

DIRECTOR DIV. 6

_____ ORIN C. KING

_____ Write In _____

DIRECTOR DIV. 7

_____ JOSEPH S. RETTINGER

_____ Write In _____

DIRECTOR DIV. 8

_____ MICHEAL D. SPORRER

_____ Write In _____

DIRECTOR DIV. 9

_____ AL STENCELL

_____ Write In _____

Check Bandwagon masthead to make sure of your
division. CHS No. _____

Your Name _____

RETURN BY JANUARY 20, 1996

PLACE
STAMP
HERE

STUART L. THAYER
430 17th AVENUE EAST
SEATTLE, WA 98112

John & Brigitte Pugh, along with the entire
Staff and Cast
of the

CLYDE BEATTY- COLE BROS. CIRCUS

Wish You
a Merry
Christmas
AND
HAPPY NEW YEAR



In the first installment of this story (*Bandwagon* November-December, 1994), we described how, during the winter of 1946-47, James Edgar built a brand new Sparks railroad circus in winter quarters at Venice's airport only to have it die without completing its first tour. These events have historic significance on at least two accounts. First, as it turned out, 1947 Sparks was the last field circus either framed for or converted to rail transportation. Second, the winter of 1946-1947 marked the beginning of Venice, Florida as a show town. The passing of one epoch thus saw the beginning of another.

THE CAVALCADE

As we described in detail in PART I, the City of Venice had become a circus site because it had obtained through the War Assets Administration a fine ex-Army Air Base complete with numerous hangars and other buildings. There the City had enthusiastically accommodated Sparks, and word of Venice's cooperation spread throughout showbiz. With the demise of Edgar's enterprise way out on Puget Sound in September, 1947, it soon became obvious that there would be no Sparks Circus returning to Venice for the winter of 1947-1948. As it needed tenants for its big airport property, the City was on the lookout for another show. That interested carnival man Harry Bernstein, known in the trade as Al Wagner.¹

From 1938 through 1943 Wagner, together with his wife Hattie, had operated a motorized carnival titled Great Lakes Exposition. They elevated their operation to the rails by buying cars at a December, 1943 sale of carny equipment that had been part of a Rubin & Cherry--Royal American combine.²

The Wagners called their new 1944 railroad show the Cavalcade of Amusements or "Amusement" (singular on some of its posters). It grew rapidly. Carnival historian Joe McKennon wrote that in 1946 (only its third year of operation) the Cavalcade moved on 50 cars making it the largest of all carnivals.³ That would have meant that it surpassed even Carl Sedlmayr's Royal American Shows which usually took "biggest" carny honors. If what we read in *Billboard* was true, the Wagners' Cavalcade was even bigger in 1947. To make its first two dates that year, Montgomery, Al-

VENICE, FLORIDA AND THE CIRCUS

PART TWO

By Richard J. Reynolds, III

abama and Nashville, Tennessee, it was said to have moved on 48 cars in two sections of 24 cars each. However, during the third stand at Memphis, Tennessee, played in connection with that city's annual Cotton Carnival, another eight flats of attractions were allegedly dispatched from Mobile winter quarters. After tightening up the loading order, it thereafter moved on either 53 or 54 cars.⁴ Of all the traveling shows, only the mighty Ringling-Barnum, on 108 that year, clearly surpassed it.

The Cavalcade carnival's 1947 expansion was not limited to its physical aspect. On March 22nd an ambitious management change was announced with Al Wagner allying himself with two well known personalities from the circus business. They were Jack Tavlin and Henry Ringling North.⁵ The former had been a promoter of printed circus programs and a partner with Art Concello in operating the 1945 Russell Bros. Pan-Pacific railroad circus. In 1949, two years after the events here described, he would be the main man of the Cole Bros. circus.⁶

North needs no introduction. Suffice it to say that he had been second in command to his brother, John Ringling

Henry Ringling North. Pfening Archives.



North, in running the Greatest Show On Earth from 1938 to 1942. But, in 1947 brother Henry or "Buddy" was on the outs--had been since 1943 when he and Johnny had been ousted in the first of the many Ringling palace coups. For at least a part of that time "Buddy" North had been in military service. Nevertheless, even after brother John had maneuvered himself back into

Ringling management in 1946, Henry remained "at liberty." That troubled his mother, Ida Ringling North, who saw her youngest son simply idling, waiting for older brother Johnny to secure him a place with Big Bertha.⁷ So, with nothing else to do and as incongruous as it might sound and as short lived as it seems to have been, Ivy Leaguer Henry Ringling North joined the crude, acerbic, and volatile Al Wagner in the carnival business.

Another Tavlin ally, Marshall Johnson, was also involved in the Cavalcade's new deal.⁸ He appears to have been one and the same as the Selma, Alabama chap of that name who had been associated with James Edgar. Readers will recall from PART I of our story that Marshall Johnson was the one said to have had a hankering to get into the circus business who had served initially in 1946 as president of the Florida Circus Corporation d/b/a Sparks Circus.

The new Wagner-North-Tavlin-Johnson syndicate called themselves the Pacific Eastern Amusement Company, PEA for short. It took the form of a corporation and seems to have been conceived as a management organization which would bring new creative ideas to, and govern the affairs of, not only the Cavalcade of Amusements carnival but possibly other kinds of shows as well. The newcomers put up what Wagner would later describe as "a fair chunk of good faith money." No doubt owing to the prominence of his name, Henry Ringling North was named PEA's president with Al Wagner serving as vice-president and general manager of the Cavalcade of Amusements, meaning that Wagner still ran the big carnival.⁹

During the winter of 1946-1947 The Cavalcade had wintered at the Mobile, Alabama fairgrounds. Wagner apparently had a fondness for the Gulf Coast as he had hibernated his outfit the previous winter (1945-1946) at Pascouga,

Mississippi just a short jaunt along the beach west of Mobile. The Mobile fairgrounds were described as quite nice with the show having the use of the then ubiquitous ex-Army buildings, these particular ones said to have had concrete floors. Just before the 1947 season opened, Wagner inked a lease with Mobile's city fathers to return to their fairgrounds for the next winter (1947-1948),¹⁰ an agreement that seems to have slipped his mind when Venice came calling five months later.

Al Wagner, owner of the Cavalcade of Amusements. Pfening Archives.



The Cavalcade of Amusements opened its 1947 season at home in Mobile, an eight day stand that kicked off on April 5th. But, Al Wagner was not on the scene. He had taken ill. In his absence, the new team of Henry Ringling North, Jack Tavlin, and Marshall Johnson got the show up and running. "Buddy" North and his wife made arrangements to travel with the carnival. However, that did not last past the second date in Montgomery, if that long.

When the show trains arrived in Nashville from Montgomery on April 21st, the news scribes were on hand eager to interview North in his new role as a carny king. He was not there. He had returned to Sarasota and was planning to be in New York on May 1st. Meanwhile, back in Nashville, rumors on the lot said that North had left the Cavalcade in a huff and that the high sounding Pacific Atlantic Amusement Company had come apart. That appears to have been correct. Not only was North gone but Tavlin too. In

fact the latter had left shortly after the Mobile opener to go to New York, ostensibly to scout new ideas and talent for the PEA. He was to confer with North in New York. It is our bet that the newcomers found Wagner too difficult. From all we can gather, Wagner was a loner with a hot temper to boot, the latter being a fatal trait as we shall see. When asked about the rumored demise of the PEA he remarked that if the Tavlin group had jumped ship, the Cavalcade would be enriched by the money they had put up.¹¹

In his book, *Circus Kings*, (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1960), Henry Ringling North said nothing about his association with Al Wagner and the Pacific Eastern Amusement Company, evidence that the adventure was both fleeting and, at least to him, possibly demeaning. Further proof of PEA's short life is to be found in an October, 1947 announcement by Al Wagner that, though he would continue as manager, he had sold his carnival to a Frank Dirago of Tusculumbia, Alabama and O. J. "Whitey" Weiss, a concessionaire on the show.¹² No reference was made to PEAers North, Tavlin, or Marshall Johnson. The October deal also seems to have gone awry as all subsequent Cavalcade write ups we have seen implicate Wagner as the show's proprietor. Regardless of its ownership opera, the Cavalcade of Amusements made definite plans to spend the winter of 1947-48 at the Venice, Florida airport.

The Cavalcade of Amusements in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Circus World Museum collection.

Venice City Councilman Smyth D. Brohard went to Louisville, Kentucky while the Cavalcade of Amusements was playing a September 5-13, 1947 date there. He met with Al Wagner who was aware of the Venice airport facilities and expressed interest in using them for the coming winter. There were a variety of reasons, not least of which, as we see it, was a plan to take on the Royal American carnival in its home base, Tampa. Upon returning to Venice, Brohard announced to the City Council on September 16th that the big carnival was interested in coming to their town.¹³

On or about October 1, 1947 Cavalcade agent William B. Naylor went to Venice and made a deal to winter the show at the airport. Mayor Higel informed the public on October 2nd. The agreement called for the carnival to lease three large buildings at the western (Gulf of Mexico) end of the field. A fourth structure, a 40 x 80 steel warehouse, was included as well. The term of the lease was for six months with the lessee having an option for an additional four and a half years.¹⁴

One of the Cavalcade's buildings was to be a large nose hangar similar to the one used by Sparks the previous winter at the opposite or eastern (U.S. 41) end of the field. From all that appears the City was prepared to have the ex-air base serve as the 1947-1948 winter quarters for both Wagner's Cavalcade of Amusements and Edgar's Sparks Circus should the latter find its way back across the country from Renton, Washington. The two shows would have been ensconced at opposite ends of the field. And, in October the City was still holding itself open for the possibility that Sparks might return.¹⁵

Al Wagner was expected to send 36 of the Cavalcade's 54 railroad cars to Venice around November 1st with the remaining 18 to arrive around Christ-





Loaded Cavalcade flat cars. The wagons were lettered only "Cavalcade." Pfening Archives.

mas. The latter would be delayed because they were said to be headed for Hawaii!¹⁶ That sounds like a press agent's pipe dream. We have seen no evidence that it materialized. At best, it was probably a notion to send 18 cars of rides and equipment to the West Coast with the wagons being trans-loaded to a ship bound for Aloahland.

On October 4, 1947, two days after Mayor Higel's news, Cavalcade agent Naylor announced from Tampa that not only would the show winter in Venice but that it would play a date on a prime lot inside Tampa from October 22nd through November 2nd. The show was to appear under the auspices of the Ybor City Optimists with proceeds going to the Tampa Boys Club.¹⁷

Royal American owner Carl Sedlmayr was outraged at Wagner's audacity. Immediately upon learning of the Cavalcade's planned invasion of his home fort, Sedlmayr flew to Tampa. No doubt portraying Royal American as one of Tampa's best citizens, he put a full court press on city officials and

The Cavalcade of Amusements flat cars were lettered Nation's Greatest Show. Circus World Museum collection.



sponsors alike, calling in all his political chips. He got Tampa's mayor to withdraw his support and its zoning authorities to rule against Cavalcade's use of the prime Tampa lot. The Optimists backed down when Sedlmayr gave them a reported three

grand advance on a Royal American date the following spring. Outmaneuvered, the Cavalcade booked an alternate lot outside Tampa's city limits.¹⁸

When Al Wagner arrived for an advance inspection, he took one look at the substitute suburban lot, declared it a loser, and sent word that the Cavalcade was to close its 1947 season and head for winter quarters after its date in Laurel, Mississippi (October 13-18). However, the winter destination would not be Venice, Florida. Instead, the show put up again at the Mobile, Alabama fairgrounds, arriving there on October 20th.¹⁹ Venice was left high and dry.

Several factors were involved in the abrupt turn of events. According to one account, Wagner did not want to risk \$8,000 in railroad bills to jump some 650 miles from Laurel to a Tampa date that loomed as a disaster followed by yet another move down to Venice.²⁰

The City of Venice offered a different explanation, stating that the reason the big carnival did not come to town was because of the railroad. According to the City, the Seaboard Air Line advised that its Venice tracks could not accommodate the 54 cars which the Cavalcade would bring.²¹ The railroad was originally approached about storing carnival cars on three quarters of a mile of track south of the Venice depot.²² In those days Seaboard had very limited track space south of the depot. As shown in the map illustrating PART I, the main line ran down to and just across Center Road. Just north of the road a wye ran off to the east while across the main from the wye a siding

turned out to the west and extended the short distance down to Center Road. That siding was known as the "wood track," no doubt because the term described commodities loaded into or unloaded from cars spotted there from time to time.

To accommodate the Cavalcade's cars south of the Venice depot would have meant storing them on the main line as there simply was not enough room otherwise. Even though the tracks leading from town down to Center Road represented the absolute end of the line for Seaboard in that part of the State and traffic was not all that heavy, nevertheless, Seaboard did need to get to and use its wye for turning its daily passenger train. In 1947 and on up to the coming of Amtrak in 1971, Seaboard and its 1967 successor, Seaboard Coast Line (now CSX), had a daily train of at least two cars (sleeper and coach and sometimes more) that



A typical carnival baggage wagon on Cavalcade of Amusements. Joe Bradbury photo.

operated between Tampa and Venice via Sarasota. At Tampa the cars were taken from (southbound) or put into (northbound) the west coast connections of Seaboard's famed New York-Florida streamliners such as "The Silver Meteor" or "The Camellia."²³ The southbound cars from these trains, together with their locomotive, would arrive in Venice late each afternoon, be turned on the wye down near Center Road, spend the night up at the depot, and then head back north early the next morning. That operation would have been virtually impossible if the way to the wye were blocked with a long string of carny cars standing on the main line south of the depot. A daily switching operation to move them out of the way each day was obviously out of the question. There is little doubt, therefore, that under these conditions the railroad would have said "No." Thirteen years later, when the Ringling show came to town, the car storage problem was solved by installing more tracks down at Center



Road, but that was not in the cards for Al Wagner's carnival.

Years later it was reported in Venice that because of the railroad problem the Calvacade's contract for the airport winter quarters was never signed by the show!²⁴ That seems passing strange in light of the October, 1947 announcements by both parties that Venice was a done deal.²⁵ Moreover, Al Wagner seems to have believed he had a binding contract, for he stated on October 25th that he would pay in full for the Venice quarters he had leased but would not be using.²⁶ We would hope that the City did not find itself depending on any of that money.

The Cavalcade of Amusements thus became a story of "almost" and "what if" for Venice. Even if the carnival had gone there as planned in November, 1947, it would not have been a Venice resident for long.

Six and a half years later, the Cavalcade, then down to only 30 cars, had begun its season opener at Pensacola, Florida. The date was April 11, 1954, and Al Wagner was sour. He had just waged a battle with the IRS over an attachment which had almost prevented his Cavalcade from leaving its Mobile quarters. He was in no mood for confrontation. William O. Burke, a painter to whom the show owed money, drove onto the Pensacola lot and up to Wagner's office wagon. Spotting the owner inside, he demanded recompense. Shouting, "I'll give it to you," the tempestuous Wagner came out of the wagon pulling a gun. Burke was armed and drew too. In a scene right out of the then recent movie *High Noon* both men aimed and fired. When the smoke cleared, Harry Bernstein, better known as Al Wagner, lay dead, so too his show. It folded immediately and was soon under the auctioneer's hammer.²⁷

RINGLING IN DISTRESS

When Wagner and his Cavalcade met their cataclysmic end, storm clouds were intensifying over the

The Sarasota winter quarters looking east from the main entrance on a crowded afternoon in March 1955. The tall three story building in center housed the menagerie animals (ground floor, right) with the sail loft upstairs. The large car shop is at left. Bob MacDougall collection.

Greatest Show On Earth. They had been gathering since at least 1950 and broke with a fury in 1955. Within a year the Big Show lay in ruins. What we all now see clearly in hindsight, and was obvious back then to the discerning, is that by the early 1950s Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey had become an anachronism—at least as we then knew it.

Operationally and size wise, the mid-point of the 20th century found the Ringling show much the same as it had been at the start. Not so the economic and social forces that ultimately controlled its destiny. The fifties were a time of great transition from the placidity of slower paced times to the coming upheavals. Much of what is now deplored (or praised depending upon one's viewpoint) as the mania and mores of

Inside the menagerie building on March 13, 1955 showing permanent row of cages along the southern side. Author's collection.



the sixties had begun to surface the decade before.²⁸

The interplay of forces that brought down the Ringling big top, the events along that path, and the personalities involved have all been the subject of much exposition which we do not want to rehash simply for the sake of doing so.²⁹ However, because they are inescapably part of the Venice circus story—in fact the reason why there is one—we must delve into them. Moreover, as we shall see, much of what had been Ringling's Sarasota winter quarters simply reappeared in Venice, making the final days of the former necessarily the first of the latter. From these perspectives, therefore, we take our charge.

Costs rose steeply in the 1950s, particularly transportation and labor.³⁰ Ringling's huge tenting enterprise was nothing if not labor intensive, and many business operations of that character were doomed at mid-century. (Look at what happened to the steam operation of the railroads.) Moreover, the circus roustabout force was becoming less reliable. Good jobs were now plentiful and standards of living for all social classes were on the rise. The promise of three squares, a place to sleep, and some (but not much) pocket change had once attracted rugged but relatively dependable and faithful men. That was no longer the case. More and more the circus had to draw its labor from the seriously marginalized and truly derelict.³¹

Worst of all, the early fifties saw a steady decline in Ringling's attendance. Demographic changes were partly to blame. Population was dispersing, moving to the scattered suburbs with their many new diversions, particularly those associated with warm weather. In the larger metropolitan areas, folks with money for tickets were no longer conveniently concentrated near circus grounds. Good vacant lots of the huge size required by Ringling were more and more difficult to secure, particularly



African black rhinos, Bill and Lil, winter of 1955-1956. View looks west with menagerie/sail loft building in background. Bob MacDougall collection.

ones in safe areas that could attract folks without their feeling threatened. More than anything, however, the downturn was due to the public's changing tastes for entertainment. Without a doubt, television was the number one culprit.³²

Had Ringling's ownership and management all been on the same page of the play book in the early 1950s, the disaster of the 1955 and 1956 seasons might have been avoided. Whether one loved or hated him, there is no doubting that Ringling's general manager, former aerialist Arthur M. Concello, was a brilliant circus operator. President and majority shareholder John Ringling North had let him run it since late 1947. Concello was certainly aware of the forces bearing down on the Big Show. And, he made adjustments to reduce the ever menacing

overhead. North, on the other hand, was often unrealistic, opposing size reductions. He fashioned himself an artist who instinctively knew what would attract the public. After all, he could point to a record of great circus triumphs. Carefully scrutinized, however, they were more past than present. So, with his personal wealth increasing and the circus not yet in dire straights, he blithely traipsed around, here and abroad, in satisfaction of his Bohemian lifestyle.³³

This was a time when, more than ever before, the show's treasury needed to make sure that it got every dollar of revenue and accounted for every penny of cost. Yet, with the owner gone most of the time, necessary controls were missing. What was worse, he did not seem to care until it was too late.

Historically, circus management has never been renowned for nurturing the

The final stand of the 1955 season, in the Sarasota winter quarters. Bob MacDougall collection.

virtue of fiduciary duty, and on the Ringling show of the early 1950s, Concello allowed, nay encouraged, the development of unsavory practices. Below him was a group of executives and bosses who became known, pejoratively, as the "Sneeze Mob," circus patois for a group of racketeers. They skimmed from the show. One of their tricks was the sale of seats for performances with the money going into their pockets. Collusion with outside suppliers was another: for a cut from a vendor, the mob would authorize payment by the show of an inflated invoice for goods and services. The Sneezers also ran internal petty rackets and schemes designed to recoup for themselves (not the show) salaries paid to employees. These included gambling, beer and whiskey sales, and loan sharking, all patently unlawful and contrary to official show policy.³⁴ It is no secret that Art Concello got his part.³⁵ That was in addition to the aboveboard income he earned, e.g. salary, royalties for use of his seat wagons, and fees for booking his acts.³⁶ He made a high art of circus money-making.

The showgoing public was mostly protected from the nefarious schemes but not the show's treasury. Some of the rackets went way back into circus history.³⁷ Such was the crude nature of genre. By the mid-1950s, however, public sentiment was running against old forms of exploitation, particularly those which targeted the disadvantaged such as circus workers. Nevertheless, it was argued that the schemes were necessary to keep the



Ringling bosses happy; and it was only those chaps who could keep the dinosaur rolling.³⁸ Unfortunately, that proved to be true. Yet, we have got to believe that by the 1950s efficient, owner driven management could have ended or minimized the schemes that stole from the show. It is hard to imagine Kenneth Feld missing many dollars because of like practices, but that may a difference between then and now. Despite the obvious, ominous signs that serious problems lay ahead, John Ringling North, relying on his famous "instinct" for what the public wanted, insisted on increasing the size of his circus and, in consequence, its overhead. This clashed with the ideas of his pragmatic general manager who wanted it reduced. That and other disagreements between the two led to Concello's resignation in December, 1953.³⁹ It was then too late to implement the size increase immediately so the 1954 show went out on 70 cars, the same as it had been since 1951.⁴⁰

For 1955 North implemented his increase, adding ten cars to the show so that, once out on the road, it moved on 80,⁴¹ the largest it had been since 1950. Circus enthusiasts loved it, but from a business standpoint it was ill-advised, particularly in light of the other topsy turvy changes that took place.

To run the enlarged show, John North hired Michael Burke, a friend of his brother. Buddy and Burke had been fellow World War II operatives in the highly secret Office of Strategic Services (OSS). When the War was over, Henry quit the cloak and dagger game for good; but after a three year hiatus, Burke went back to it, this time with the OSS's successor, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) where he operated until 1954. Burke was a 1939 University of Pennsylvania graduate and therefore an Ivy Leaguer like Henry who hailed from Yale. Unlike Henry, however, Burke had no circus experience whatever. That notwithstanding, he was named Executive Director of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Only the two North brothers were above him in the show's organization. The rough circus bosses mistook Burke for a weakling, and that led to serious error on their part. Underneath his polished demeanor, he was tough as nails. He had to be given that he was a former college football player and had matched wits with both Hitler's and Stalin's/Malenkov's evil empires, the latter as recently as the year before he joined the Big Show.⁴²

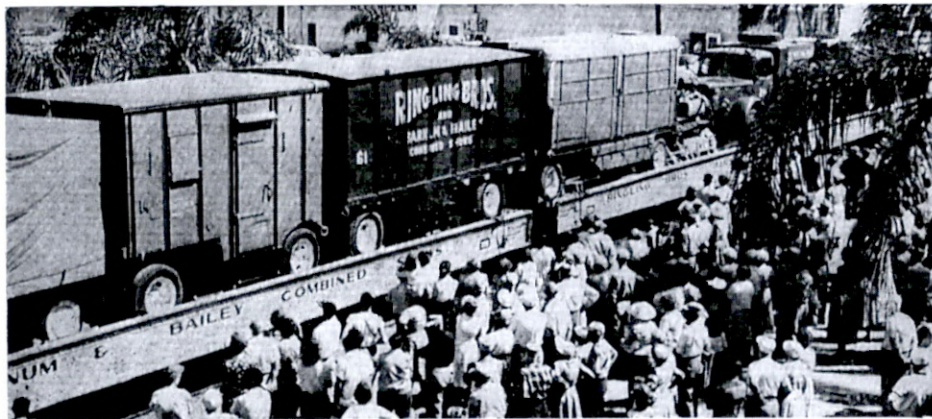
On the advice of outsiders, John North completely revolutionized the



Michael Burke, executive director Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus 1955-1956. Pfening Archives.

1955 advertising and press departments. Veterans were fired left and right, replaced by Hollywood and theatrical hype types whose ideas were repugnant to circus traditions. Pass, ticket and seating policies were changed and new ideas tried. Out of necessity, John Ringling North was now focusing more attention on his circus. Though his 1955 policies were criticized, he was trying to hit upon formulas for success as the tented monster struggled for survival in what had become for it a seemingly alien world. Some of the advertising, ticketing, seating, and promotional innovations might have worked, but too many were tried too impetuously and replaced after too short a trial to make meaningful judgments as to their long

First section leaving for the last big top tour in 1956. Wagons shown include No. 61 props and No. 82 rhino cage. Photo taken at Atlantic Coast Line's Sarasota depot. Author's collection.



range value. All the while morale on the show was falling, and there was much disaffection among the troupers.⁴³

Michael Burke hated the Sneeze Mob and the rackets they promoted. Though Concello was gone, those progeny of his regime were still aboard. The new Executive Director wanted them out, and obtained John North's permission to remove them and their grafting ways. North had not been particularly concerned about the illicit activities. An amoralist, he saw them as mostly out of sight and not adversely affecting show patrons, the quality of the performance, or his personal standard of living. Ergo, why bother? Of course, the show's treasury was being harmed, and Burke seems to have hammered on that. So, North agreed, leaving Burke, however, to do the dirty work, something North always avoided.⁴⁴

In one of the most dramatic confrontations in Ringling history, new man Burke fired the Sneeze Mob in St. Paul, Minnesota on August 4, 1955. Burke and the show were threatened with revenge, and with much of the work force faithful to their fired bosses the show came within a hair's breadth of folding right then and there. However, it rallied and went on, but not smoothly. That was gone with the Sneeze. Despite their unsavory side, they were experts in the very narrow field of rail show operations and logistics. Their talents in that respect were almost irreplaceable.⁴⁵ Within a month of the St. Paul confrontation, Ringling had become an organizing target of the notorious Jimmy Hoffa and his International Brotherhood of Teamsters. There seems to be little doubt that it was the fired circus bosses and/or their minions who siced the union on the show. Pickets and near violence were waiting in California in September.⁴⁶

Leaving the West Coast, Ringling-Barnum limped back east through the Sunbelt States, plagued along the way

by operational difficulties and occasional picketing. Receipts improved somewhat but not enough to assuage the losses. Trying to reap as much revenue as possible, the show played Florida dates into December. That was a first, as neither the Barnum, Ringling, nor the Combined circuses had ever put up canvas during that month. The final stand came on December 4, 1955 at Sarasota winter quarters.⁴⁷ There, the midway, a sidewalled menagerie, and the big top were erected toward the back of the quarters along the northern side of the main driveway, just east of the tall menagerie/sail loft building. As it turned out, Sarasotans would never again see the Ringling show play a formal engagement in their fair city.

RINGLING FOLDS

The next season, 1956, was a disaster from start to early finish. One must wonder what prompted Johnny North to even attempt it. Yet, it would be a 79 car show with some new offerings. French artist and theatrical designer Marcel Vertes was hired and brought his flowery post-impressionism to the program and costuming. For the first time ever violins were part of Ringling-Barnum's musical score, and they were accompanied by a bevy of boos from traditionalists. On the lot the new big top was supported by center poles painted in eye popping spiral stripes like those of barber poles. When they managed to get it up (which was not often) the menagerie tent was of radically new design--square, with the top suspended from four poles or masts standing near each of its corners.⁴⁸

No amount of innovation, however, could overcome Ringling's mounting personnel and labor problems. There was a steady parade of resignations by veteran staffers, bosses, and performers in the months preceding the 1956 tour. They included treasurer Theo Forstall, publicist Roland Butler, bandmaster Merle Evans, ringmaster Angelo "Count" Nicholas, vocalist Harold Ronk, elephant trainer Hugo Schmitt, and menagerie superintendent C. R. Montgomery.⁴⁹ Butler and Evans were all time greats. To make matters even worse, union organizers were now set to ruin the show.

In February, 1956 North and Burke had met in Miami with Jimmy Hoffa. It was not pleasant. The two showmen tried to point out that Teamsters' wages would be ruinous. The union pugilist ranted and threatened.⁵⁰ When the show got to New York for the opener in Madison Square Garden, picket

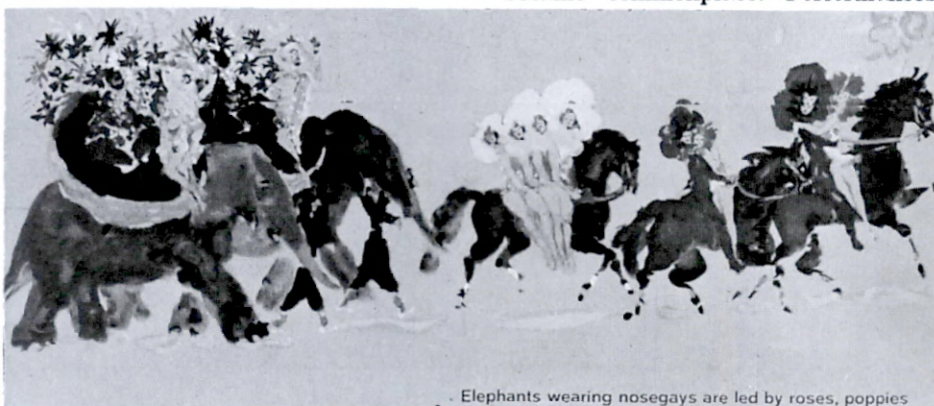


A picket for the American Guild of Variety Artists in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1956. Pfening Archives.

lines were waiting, the Teamsters being joined by the American Guild of Variety Artists. Even so the engagement got under way. For the second year in a row, there was a national TV showing of highlights with commentary by John Ringling North himself. The press gave the 1956 edition only tepid applause, and business was spotty.⁵¹

At the indoor dates in New York and then Boston, the Teamsters' pickets did not have as much adverse effect as did those of the Variety Artists. The celebrity benefit show in New York was a bust as the big Hollywood and TV personalities were union members and would not go onto the Garden floor. What a contrast from the year before when Marilyn Monroe had ridden an elephant and Milton Berle had been guest ringmaster. A number of Ringling performers were card carrying Variety Guild members; and when told to do so by their union, they too took a hike. Among them were new vocalist/ringmaster Preston Lambert, noted

Marcel Vertes flower theme for the Ringling-Barnum's 1956 edition. Author's collection.



Elephants wearing nosebags are led by roses, poppies

dressage rider Marion Seifert, Alzona high wire member Lynn Brent, the entire Fredonia troupe (Risley act), and beloved clowns Felix Adler, Otto Griebeling, and Emmett Kelly. Adding insult to injury, in Boston the Teamsters and A.G.V.A. opposed Ringling with a rival "union" circus that included defectors from the Big Show.⁵² When the under canvas part of the 1956 tour began was when the Teamsters flexed their muscles. The big dog himself, Dave Beck, Hoffa's nominal boss, got into the act. (Both were future federal inmates.)⁵³ They now had Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey where they wanted it, out in the open with plenty of opportunity for vandalism on the show grounds and worse along the routes to and from the circus trains. There was sabotage--sand in the fuel tanks of the motorized equipment, slashed tires, wagons disappearing, damage to winch cables, and the hurling of both threats and bricks.⁵⁴ Picketing was relentless.⁵⁵

As the 1956 season unfurled, Ringling's work force became increasingly unstable with rapid turnover. New hires sometimes turned out to be union plants intent on damaging operations, e.g., drivers taking wagons to remote places and abandoning them.⁵⁶ Green grooms and new elephant men could not handle their charges. Stallions fought uncontrollably when unloaded from their stock cars. At New York's Madison Square Garden, later in Washington, D.C., then in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and again in New Haven, Connecticut young elephants broke and ran. At Waterbury, Connecticut two of them got in a fight. A number of elephant handlers were injured in these escapades.⁵⁷ Incredible as it might seem for that year of turmoil, the show was carrying a herd of 45 elephants, 21 of which were very young, skittish animals.⁵⁸

The movement of the show from town to town became a study of operational collapse. Late railroad arrivals became commonplace. Performances

were late if not blown altogether, and tickets had to be refunded. That was particularly galling because at some stands the crowds were there if only they could have been accommodated.⁵⁹

A storm in Geneva, New York on July 1st destroyed the big top and for three days the show was presented sidewalled under the open sky, reminiscent of Charlton Heston's and Betty Hutton's heroics in DeMille's movie of four years previous. The frayed and torn 1954 big top was rushed to New York from Sarasota; and on the fourth day after the blowdown, at Niagara Falls (5th), the performances went back under canvas. At Meadville, Pennsylvania (11th) the seat wagons did not get to the lot, some of them having been tipped over onto their sides en route from the train. As a result, ticket holders had to watch the show either standing up or sitting on the ground.⁶⁰ The end was near.

Throughout most of this travail John Ringling North had been elsewhere. He finally arrived on the lot at Alliance, Ohio (July 15th). It seems that he was actually planning to implement drastic reductions in the size of his circus after which it would continue the 1956 tour. However, after seeing the mess first hand, he shook his head, sighed resignedly, and made the decision to shut it down altogether. That night, aboard Jomar, his private railroad car, he wrote out the execution order. It would be carried out the next day, July 16, 1956, at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania—by others besides him of course. The news spread like wildfire, and the national media and press rushed to the lot to cover "the end of the circus." That night the last performance, though two hours late getting started, was presented before an overflow crowd.⁶¹ Then, it was over and out forever for Ringling Bros. and

The square shaped suspension menagerie tent in 1956. Pfening Archives.



William Sternberg (l) and Edward Kasper (r) working inside the Sarasota menagerie building on July 17, 1956 repairing a former porcupine cage while a tiger looks on. Compare the fancy decorations with the drab cages in the 1955 photo. Author's collection.

Barnum & Bailey as an American field show.

It was a sad circus train (all three sections of it) that crept south to Sarasota following the closing in Pittsburgh. The doleful portrait painted by the press reminds one of the scenes and sounds from *Dumbo*, Walt Disney's 1941 animated film, in which the little circus train limped along through the rainy night, broken hearted after its big top was wrecked.

John Ringling North has been described as holed up aboard Jomar, crushed with despair. His close friend Rudy Bundy, the show's front door manager, was with him for the ride.⁶² In recent comments Bundy indicated that while his boss was despitited, he was not all that grief stricken, recalling that they enjoyed the culinary delights of Marcel, North's personal French chef who worked in Jomar's galley during the southbound trip.⁶³

For the second time in its history Ringling-Barnum had closed early in Pennsylvania and gone crawling back to Sarasota. The first time, in 1938, when John Ringling North was also at the helm, a labor strike had closed the show in Scranton. Now, eighteen years

later, much the same had happened but on the opposite side of the Keystone State. In 1938 the show had reacted by reloading in Sarasota. It sent 24 cars of its features and equipment back out on the road to join, and nearly double the size of, its subsidiary Al G. Barnes and Sells Floto circus for the remainder of that year's tour.⁶⁴ There would be no such effort this time as North had decided that Ringling-Barnum's tenting days were done.

Amid much sympathetic cheering from the populace, the Ringling trains arrived back at Sarasota winter quarters on July 19, 1956. For months thereafter the circus more or less lay where it landed. The animals were cared for; but, when the property and equipment wagons came off the flat cars, they were just scattered all over the place. Most of the work force was dismissed, and many wagons were not even unloaded. The sleepers were described as filthy and stinking with unremoved garbage.⁶⁵ This sad state of affairs did not escape the attention of Charles and Edith Ringling's descendants. Collectively, they held forty-nine percent of the show's shares while North had the controlling fifty-one percent. Charging mismanagement and breach of fiduciary duty, the so-called "Forty-niners" instituted litigation in 1957 against the two North brothers and Art Concello.⁶⁶ It would drag on for years. Ringlingwise, there was much distress in Sarasota as the decade of the fifties wound down.

North's announcement of the Pittsburgh closing stated that henceforth the Greatest Show On Earth would play indoor arenas.⁶⁷ Back then, however, there were not enough adequately sized ones around the country so, as it turned out, the show would also have to play in ballparks and similar outdoor venues. But, who would tackle the daunting task of adapting the circus to a totally new method of operating?

The obvious answer was the resourceful and steely Art Concello, and North went to him begging and pleading. The sly Art held out until, in October, 1956, he got what he wanted, carte blanche authority over the resurrection of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey.⁶⁸ To quote historian Fred D. Pfening, Jr., the show then became "Concello Bros. all the way."⁶⁹

Concello's new downsized circus was essentially a truck show. During the three and a half years of such operations the number of highway units varied. For example, there were 14 show owned straight trucks and tractor-trailer units in 1957 but only 10 in

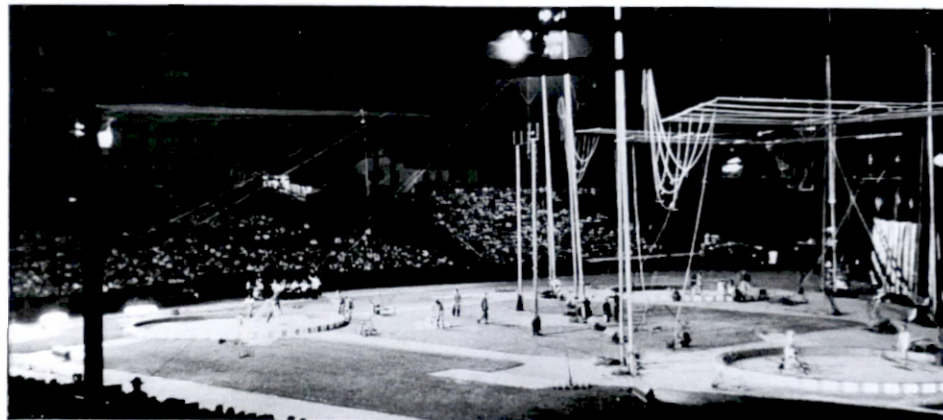


Flat car loaded with new van semi-trailer and Mack truck ready to leave for New York in the spring of 1957. Dominic Yodice collection.

1959. Power for the semi-trailers was provided by a combination of six Chevrolet and five Mack tractors. The Chevrolets were purchased new. However, the Macks were old hands from the big top days and were re-fitted with fifth wheels so they could pull trailers. Three straight trucks from the railroad show also saw service. So too a school bus that had been used to haul personnel from train to lot. In the new set up, it served as a circus office.⁷⁰

Notwithstanding that it had donned a new truck show face, the re-constituted Ringling-Barnum could still lay claim to rail operations. But, just barely. A small part of the old railroad equipment was pressed into service during each of the first three seasons of the new deal. A train comprised of 15 Ringling-Barnum owned cars (8 flat cars, 4 stocks, 3 sleepers), plus a system baggage car

Evening performance of Ringling-Barnum as a truck show at Atlanta's Ponce de Leon baseball park in July 1958. Author's collection.



to begin the 1957 season. Father Elslander of Sarasota's St. Martha's Catholic Church was at trackside to administer the traditional departure blessing. The train took the menagerie and other equipment to New York after which it moved on to Boston. Then, however, the 15 Ringling cars were returned to Sarasota carrying all the animals except those needed for the performance. Arrival back at quarters was via Seaboard Air Line on or about May 23rd.⁷¹

In 1958, for the first time in its history, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey did not open its season in New York.⁷² Rather than making a 1,200 mile haul without any revenue, Concello followed the obviously more practical procedure of breaking the trip north from Sarasota by playing the opening engagement along the way—at Charlotte, North Carolina which offered the largest and newest indoor arena in the South. That established a routing practice which has been followed ever since, to wit: new Ringling editions work their out of Florida making money while ironing out the kinks so that everything is in smooth

running order upon arrival in the Big Apple.

That year Ringling again used its old circus train to carry a menagerie north, this time for a New York only engagement—no Boston. The 1958 train was a really abbreviated one, comprised of but four flat cars, Warren no. 244 and Thralls nos. 229, 233, and 241. Altogether, they carried 12 cages, a giraffe wagon, and a D-4 Caterpillar tractor (B-10, 1955 Model 7U 31499SP).⁷³ There were no stock cars in the consist because the elephants and horses were already on the road for the Charlotte engagement. Except for the gorilla cage (No. 97) and its two occupants, neither the four flats, the tractor, nor the cages and animals ever returned to Sarasota. After the Garden run the animals were dispersed by sale or lease.⁷⁴ The gorillas went from New York to join the Royal American carnival in Memphis for the



Remodeled winter quarters giraffe barn with new pens on south side in 1957. Author's collection.

remainder of the season. To make that trip the ape wagon was apparently shipped aboard a system flat car as the four Ringling cars stayed back in the East.⁷⁵

After they had been unloaded in New York to begin the 1958 Garden run, the flat cars went into storage there on tracks of the New York Central System. When the date was done, two of them (Thrall No. 229 and Warren No. 244, the latter a runs car) left for Pawtucket, Rhode Island transporting the D-4 Cat and seven cages. The animals were destined for that city's Slater Park Zoo. Some of them were sold outright, but the major ones were only leased to the zoo, including male African black rhino, Bill; female Nile hippo, Chester; and mother giraffe, Ingrid, with her calf, Suzy (or



Local truck pulling cage No. 78 from train to zoo in Pawtucket, Rhode Island in May, 1958. Bob MacDougall collection.

quarters on February 23, 1958.⁷⁶ Susie), that had been born in Sarasota.

Ringling had made a decision to retain some of its fine animals to comprise a menagerie, but they would be shown only at the annual Madison Square Garden date. That way New Yorkers would not be aware of the drastic size reduction so evident at other engagements and illustrates the importance assigned by the show to its annual date with the Gothamites.

Only the gorillas would go to and from Sarasota and later Venice. The rest of the beasts would stay in the East, loaned to nearby zoos until recalled each spring for the Garden. Pawtucket's Slater Park was the first to board them, but they were there only once (May, 1958 to March, 1959). Next would be Bob Dietch's Kiddie Zoo in Fair Lawn, New Jersey. He became the regular depository except for Zoo-rama at New Market, Virginia which borrowed some of the critters in 1960.⁷⁷ But, back to the four flats.

The two cars that had carried the animals to Pawtucket stayed there for a year. So too the D-4 Cat. When the time came for the 1959 Garden date, the entire ensemble was shipped back to New York attached to a regular freight train. Significantly, this was the last time the Big Show ever used its old flats to move property to a regular engagement. That historic two car Pawtucket to New York consist of March, 1959 was loaded as follows: Thrall flat No. 229 carried short cages (ex-Army ordnance trailers) Nos. 75, 78, 81, 76 and giraffe wagon No. 83;⁷⁸ Warren flat No. 244 had hippo cage No. 85, D-4 Cat No. B-10, and rhino cage No. 82. However, the last named was empty because rhino Bill had died in Pawtucket on December 19, 1958.⁷⁹

The other two flats that went up from Sarasota in 1958 (Thrall cars nos.

233 and 241) had stayed in New York all along. Hence, with the arrival from Rhode Island there were once more four flats in Gotham. At the end of the 1959 New York date, Thralls Nos. 229 and 241 were sold to the Royal American show and sent out to Memphis to join the carny there. Riding on one of them was gorilla cage No. 97 carrying old Toto and Gargantua II. So, for the second year in succession, that anthropoid duo did a carnival tour, returning to Sarasota at season's end.⁸⁰

The sale to the carnival left two flat cars stored in New York (Thrall No. 241 and Warren No. 244). We do not know what happened to no. 241, but it was probably sold from there. The last one in New York was the Warren car, and it remained there until December, 1961 when sold and shipped to Sol Walker & Company, a Tampa salvage dealer.⁸¹

The aforesaid menagerie trains marked Ringling's last use of either its old stock cars (1957) or its old flats (1957, 1958, and 1959) to make show dates. However, throughout its truck show epoch, it kept an additional foothold on rail operations by using three balloon topped baggage cars to transport the elephants, show owned horses, and perhaps some equipment. These cars first saw circus service at the end of the 1957 Boston run, and the same three seem to have been used throughout the four seasons of Ringling's life as a mostly motorized show. They were leased from the Pennsylvania Railroad and bore its title, not Ringling-Barnum's. Unless one knew what was inside or could guess by smelling, there

was no way to identify them as "circus." They moved from one stand to the next attached to regular passenger trains. Show personnel rode these same trains in system coaches provided by the various railroads.⁸² That was a real throwback. It had not been done on the Big Show since Barnum & Bailey's 1898 tenting tour of England. At the start of that season, James Bailey's per-



Local wrecker pulling rhino cage No. 82 and a short cage in a parade from train to Pawtucket zoo in May, 1958. Bob MacDougall collection

sonnel traveled separately from the rest of the circus. They were required to ride from one date to the next on regular British passenger trains until show owned sleepers were delivered in mid-season.⁸³

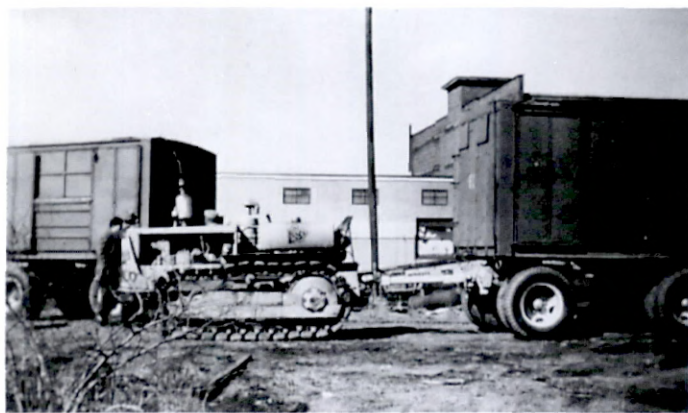
Box office returns from the first two truck campaigns were not good nor were the performances of much account, particularly when measured against the high standards of past Ringling offerings. Despite continued nagging from the Forty-niners and the carping of nostalgic circus aficionados, the Concello plan turned the corner in 1959. The operating nut had been cut since the start of the truck show. Now the performance was improving and the public was once again lining up in significant numbers. As much as anything, the return of the show to the black ultimately quieted the disgruntled minority stockholders.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, the days were numbered for the Ringling circus in Sarasota.

SARASOTA SELL OFF

By early 1958 mounting evidence foretold the end of the historic Sarasota winter quarters. The time spent there for regrouping and rehearsals

Cage No. 85 carrying Chester in Pawtucket in May, 1958. This was the last time Ringling-Barnum paraded an open hippo den. Bob MacDougall collection.



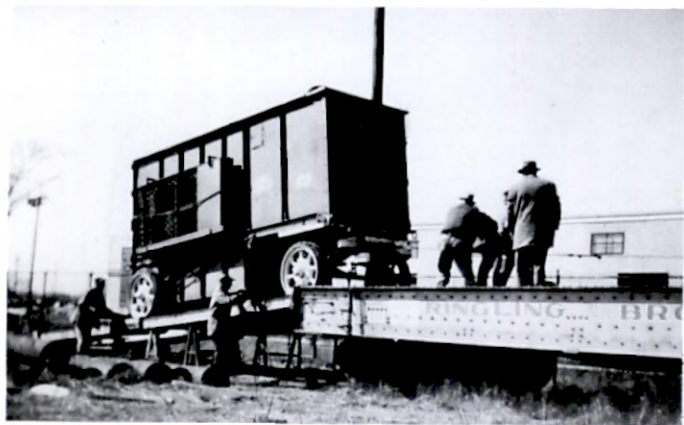


D-4 Cat No. B-10 with cage No. 81 in Pawtucket rail yards for loading in March, 1959. Bob MacDougall collection.

had been reduced from four months in the old days to five weeks in the new set up. It came as no surprise, therefore, when, on February 25th, 1958, it was announced that effective April 1st the quarters would close for good to the public.⁸⁵ Long before that North and Concello had been wanting to sell the equipment and animals no longer needed for the downsized arena circus, but the Forty-niners were opposed. However, around February, 1958 there was agreement with respect to the surplus animals.⁸⁶ Sales got under way in March and continued into the summer. Two of the first to go were a giraffe named Jimmy (to the Wild Animal Ranch, St. Petersburg, Florida), and a Nile hippo named August II (to the Jackson, Mississippi zoo). One time circus owner and 1950s Ringling menagerie boss, C.R. Montgomery, was in charge of the animal sales as well as the winter quarters.⁸⁷

On July 24th five elephants (destined for the Mexico City Zoo) plus the popular pigmy hippo, Betty Lou (headed for the Memphis zoo), departed Sar-

Giraffe wagon No. 83 going up runs onto Warren flat No. 224 in Pawtucket in March 1959. Bob MacDougall collection.



asota's Atlantic Coast Line depot in two baggage cars. They were attached to the ACL's regular northbound passenger train that departed each morning. The African black rhino, Lil, was probably on that same train as it too was sold to the Memphis zoo and got there the same day as the

hippo. There were now only a few surplus animals in winter quarters. They included four elephants, and the last of them was shipped out in August.⁸⁸

Sarasota journalist and author Gene Plowden visited the winter quarters in the fall of 1958. He found the gate locked and a watchman on duty but managed to gain admittance. However, that was not difficult as security was notoriously slack. The place was a mess, overgrown with weeds. Tall grass hid the tracks on which stood nearly 100 Ringling railroad cars, all of them faded and rusting. Buildings were crammed with circus wagons and the elephant and horse corrals were empty. Peacocks roamed freely throughout the grounds, but the only circus animals to be found were some porcupines that occupied one of the permanent cages inside the big menagerie building.⁸⁹

Despite the neglect and disarray, a treasure trove of circus property was stored there, and folks were helping themselves. This had apparently been happening ever since the collapse and retreat of July, 1956. It was common talk among circus folks and fans. No doubt owing to the litigation instituted by the Forty-niners, Art Concello employed the Thomas M. Burton Detective Agency of Sarasota to investigate the losses and install security to prevent their continuation.

The detective went to work in March, 1959. Right away some of the insider suspects headed for parts unknown. Experience told the detective to beware of arson as a cover-up for theft. The place was covered with chest high, bone dry grass and flammable materials were everywhere. Sure enough, on March 14th, someone set fire to grass just the other side of a fence

marking the northeastern boundary. It was a dry day, and a strong wind blew in the right direction. The fire spread rapidly into the circus property. Fortunately the wind shifted before the blaze reached any buildings. Fire departments from Sarasota and the Forestry Service fought the flames, and it was finally extinguished late that night. However, it did reach the area where the wagon graveyard was located; and some of the relics were consumed.⁹⁰

The Burton Agency found that Ringling properties of all types had been improperly loaned. Recipients included other circuses, private individuals, local museums, and vendors who supplied goods and services to the Ringling show. Some of the "loaned" property was retrieved. So bad was property accounting that some items thought lost or stolen actually turned up on tour with the circus or at other places where it stored stuff. Unquestionably, there had been much outright theft arranged by or with the assent of insiders. For three years disgruntled former workers had been hanging around the quarters with ready access to whatever was there. The interiors of the sleepers were particularly hard hit, being stripped of all their fittings and furnishings. Throughout his investigation, the detective encountered a preposterous but nevertheless commonly held attitude that past or present employees had a right to steal anything so long as they were not caught.⁹¹

The detective's work was completed in May, 1959. The next month the show fired C. R. Montgomery who had been in charge. Alas, it was during his watch that much of the mischief had occurred. At or about the same time (June, 1959) the Forty-niners finally agreed to the sale of all railroad and other equipment not needed for present and planned circus operations or considered to have particular historical value.⁹²

To handle the job of selling Ringling properties, C. R. Montgomery was replaced by William Whyte "Bill" Perry.⁹³ He would play a key role in terminating the Sarasota winter quarters and relocating them in Venice. For that reason we devote some biographical time to him.

Perry came to the circus from a background much different than most circus executives his age. He was born in New Rochelle, New York on July 17, 1915 and moved with his family to Sarasota in 1923. They were affluent and had a fine home on Gulf Stream Avenue overlooking Sarasota Bay. His father, Sidney R. Perry, was a prom-

inent lawyer. His uncle, William Y. Perry, was Sarasota County's first judge. His mother, Katherine Whyte Perry, was descended from an aristocratic Columbus, Georgia family. She was a noted art designer and a leading Sarasota socialite.⁹⁴

Bill Perry was a 1932 graduate of Sarasota High School where he was a classmate of long time Ringling employee and Sarasota resident, Alva Johnson. Perry then attended the University of Florida and the Ringling school and became a local newsman with the Sarasota *Herald-Tribune*. He also did public relations work for the Sarasota Chamber of Commerce.⁹⁵

In 1940 Perry was elected as a Democrat to the Florida House, representing Sarasota County. He served in the State legislature in 1941 and then enlisted in the Navy. During the war he saw intensive combat against the Japanese Imperial Navy in the South Pacific, participating in 18 major naval engagements aboard the destroyer USS Radford. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant (Junior Grade) and was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation by President Roosevelt. After the War, Perry went back to Sarasota and got into public relations. He served on the staffs of Florida Governor Dan McCarty in Tallahassee in 1953 and later Florida's U. S. Senator, George Smathers, in Washington.⁹⁶

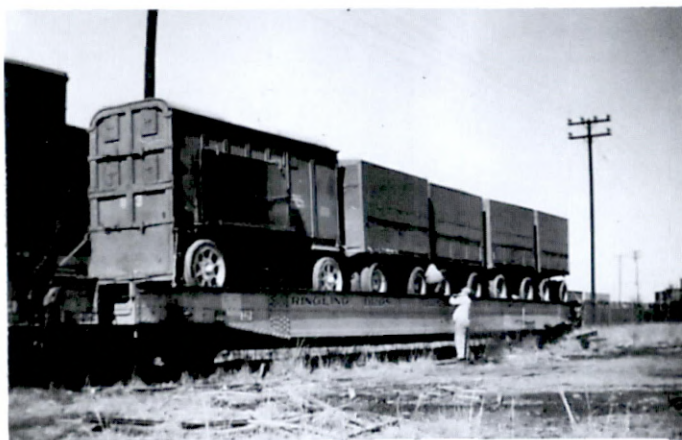
From all that appears, Perry became acquainted with Art Concello in Sarasota around 1950 and may have worked locally for the Ringling show about that time. He was in Sarasota "at liberty" in 1959 when the show made the decision to aggressively sell off its excess equipment.⁹⁷ It was probably at Concello's suggestion that the Ringling shareholders agreed to hire Perry for the job of disposal, and he established an office at the winter quarters. Later that year he was named quarters' manager. His office was in Dee Dee, a private car that had been used by the show's general manager, Sam Gumpertz, during the 1930s. By Perry's time, however, Dee Dee's wheels had been removed, and it had been set on blocks. One could find it sitting parallel to the main east-west driveway across from the menagerie building.⁹⁸

By early 1960 Bill Perry had been designated Executive Assistant to Ringling's Executive Director, Arthur M. Concello. Perry was Art's right hand man in matters pertaining to Ringling winter quarters both in Sarasota and Venice. Concello recently described his assistant as "a sort of book-keeper."⁹⁹ Careerwise, wherever Art

went Perry was close behind, a sycophant's role for sure. Thus, we find Perry with the Continental Circus at the New York World's Fair of 1964-1965, Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. in 1966, and the American tours of the Moscow Circus in 1973 and 1979,¹⁰⁰ each of said shows having an Art Concello connection.

The 1980s found Perry working in Sarasota for Concello's taxicab company.¹⁰¹ By then Perry's health was beginning to fail. He was always corpulent; by his own admission he wore size 56 trousers.¹⁰² He eventually added so much more weight that he could no longer work, and fell on hard times. To his credit, Art Concello looked after him. Willis Lawson, an old Concello lieutenant on the Ringling show, owned the Circus Feed and Grain Store on Sarasota's Whitfield Ave. Concello made arrangements to house Perry in a trailer on Lawson's store property. Perry stayed there until his condition worsened, and he was moved to the Pines of Sarasota, a nursing home. It was there that Bill Perry died on August 6, 1990 at the age of 75.¹⁰³ However, that is many years ahead of where we left him as newly appointed agent for the disposal of Ringling properties. Let us go back to that.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1959 and on into 1960, Bill Perry worked steadily selling property from the Sarasota quarters. Buyers at this on-going garage sale were other field shows; circus museums, an amusement park, contractors, farms, private individuals and junk, scrap, and salvage dealers. They included such prominent names as the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin; the Circus Hall of Fame and the Ringling Museum of the Circus, both in Sarasota; Cypress Gardens near Winter Haven, Florida; the Hunt Bros. and Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. circuses; Royal American carnival; high wire performer Harold Alzana; elephant trainer Hugo Schmitt; big cat impresario Clyde



Thrall flat car No. 229 with cages bound for New York in March, 1959. Bob MacDougall collection.

Beatty; and band leader cum circus executive Rudy Bundy.¹⁰⁴

The final nail was driven into the coffin of Ringling-Barnum's Sarasota winter quarters by one of America's all time great industrialists and a man of enormous wealth. He was Arthur Vining Davis (1867-1962), builder of the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa). Through it he made aluminum indispensable to modern life. He was a person of tireless energy. In 1948 he moved to Miami. There, despite the fact that he was already an octogenarian, he began purchasing vast quantities of south Florida real estate, so much that he eventually owned an eighth of all of Dade County (Miami), 25,000 acres in adjoining Broward County (Fort Lauderdale), plus 30,000 acres of Eleuthera Island in the Bahamas.¹⁰⁵

In 1957 Arthur Vining Davis resigned from Alcoa's board of directors, including its chairmanship. The next year he formed a real estate investment and development company. Using the first two letters of his first,

Warren flat car No. 224 loaded with, left to right, empty rhino cage No. 82, D-4 Cat No. B-10, and hippo cage No. 85 in Pawtucket in March, 1959. Bob MacDougall collection.





middle and last names, he called the new venture ARVIDA.¹⁰⁶ It soon turned its attention on Sarasota and the vast properties of the North family on Longboat, Lido, Coon, Otter, and Bird Keys that separated the Gulf of Mexico from Sarasota Bay. These properties had come to siblings John, Henry, and Salome North through the estates of their mother, Ida Ringling North (who died in 1950), and their uncle, John Ringling, the latter via a 1947 purchase from the State of Florida. In a transaction closed in May 1959, the Norths sold their Sarasota Keys properties to the Arvida Corporation for \$13,500,000.¹⁰⁷

With the Keys properties sold, the obvious next move was the disposal of the circus's real estate. On November 13, 1959 Arvida made the announcement that had long been expected—for \$340,000 it had purchased the winter quarters from Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Plans called for a subdivision of medium-priced houses, and that is what Arvida did, eventually. The circus was reported to have six months from the date of closing within which to vacate.¹⁰⁸ As it turned out, the show did not get all its stuff off the premises until October, 1960.

For some time relations between Ringling-Barnum and Sarasota County had been strained. The circus had a honey of a deal in the form of an agreement to refund and/or abate real estate taxes on the winter quarters property in return for extolling Sarasota as a tourist location. That usually took the form of an ad in the annual circus program. This vexed the tax authorities who saw it as a bad deal for the County coffers. In October, 1958, noting that the circus program failed to carry the ad, the County cancelled the tax benefit pact.¹⁰⁹ Next, it drew a bead on the sale of the winter quarters.

The County tried to torpedo the Arvida deal (or put itself in position to get some of the sale proceeds) by claiming that title reverted to it if the circus

Last run of the old Ringling-Barnum flats to make a circus date, shown here in Pawtucket as part of a 1958 New York bound train. Bob MacDougall collection.

quit the property. However, research of the original transaction and recorded deeds by Ringling's Sarasota lawyer, Henry P. Trawick Jr., revealed that the County had never owned the property. Instead, it had belonged to the Sarasota Fair Association which had transferred title to Ringling in 1927. Moreover, the circus had paid good consideration. Nevertheless, on January 13, 1960 the County filed suit claiming either a reversionary interest in, or title by adverse possession to, a portion of the property in the northeastern corner which had been leased from the circus for a prison stockade. Learning that the circus was to begin tearing down winter quarters' buildings the next day (14th) the County obtained a temporary injunction to prevent such action. The County did not have a leg to stand on and had the injunction dissolved within twenty-four hours after it had been granted. The litigation over title was eventually resolved in Ringling's favor.¹¹⁰ However, the fuss no doubt delayed the closing with Arvida. There is a lesson to be learned from all this, namely, that nothing is as fleeting as the love affair between circuses and local taxing authorities when winter quarters are first established. We will see the same romance dissolve again down in Venice.

With a deal having been struck for sale of the winter quarters, major events affecting the circus moved swiftly. A few days after Arvida's November 3, 1959 announcement came news that Ringling was refitting three of its railroad cars for what appeared to be a return to that form of transportation.¹¹¹ By the middle of November the plan was made clear.

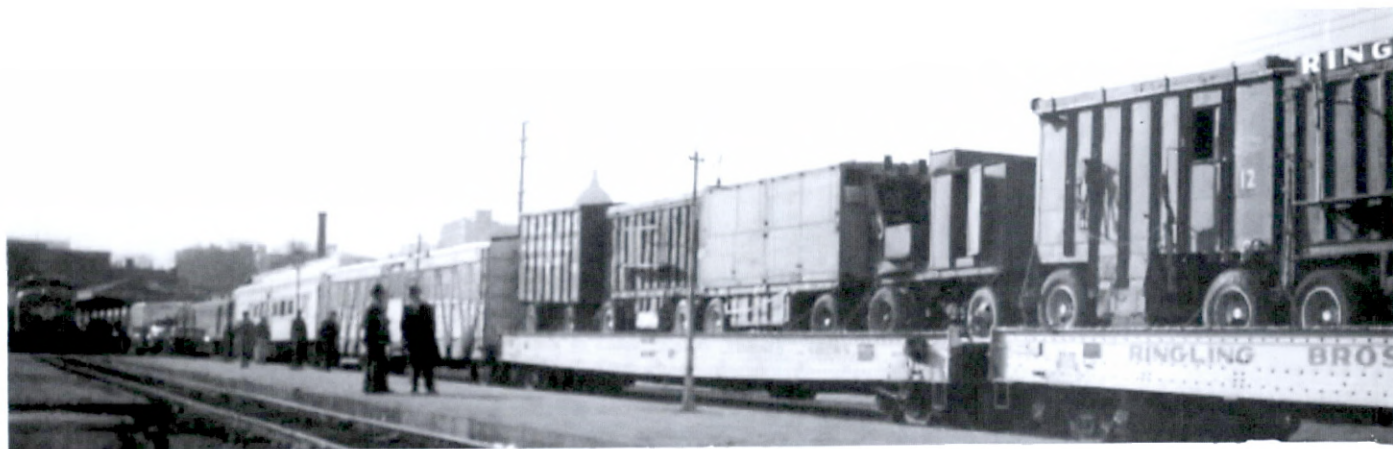
Fourteen of the relatively new World War II Army hospital cars, acquired by the circus during the winter of 1946-1947 for use as sleepers, would be made into a splashy new show train. It would

be comprised of sleepers for the personnel, stock cars for the elephants and horses, and tunnel cars for the conveying of specially built circus wagons. What welcome news for the world of fandom! Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey would once again be a full fledged railroad show. Work on the train was headed by veteran lot superintendent and big show manager Lloyd Morgan with P. J. McLain as newly hired trainmaster.¹¹² As it developed, the transition from truck show to rails would not occur until midway through the 1960 season. Further, the train would turn out to be one car longer than originally announced, i.e., 15 instead of 14 cars. A new day was at hand, but where would the circus move its winter quarters?

Art Concello had the task of finding a new home for the show. As might be expected, the Arvida announcement generated interest from other cities, Louisville, Kentucky and Miami, Florida being two mentioned in the press. Concello gave a rare interview to reporter A. J. Ruttenber of the Sarasota News on November 17, 1959. Locals were jolted when the circus man was quoted as saying, "I don't think Sarasota wants us any more." He pointed out that no one from Sarasota's city or county governments nor its Chamber of Commerce had contacted him about keeping the circus there but that he would be willing to listen if there was any interest.¹¹³ Concello's comments got immediate attention from the Sarasota and Bradenton Chambers of Commerce, and the two held a meeting with him the very next day.

Concello told the joint Chambers that if reasonable rent could be arranged and the show could raise enough capital through syndication, a fancy circus theme park, including a new winter quarters, could be installed between Sarasota and Bradenton. This had apparently been well planned in advance by the sly Art because he immediately suggested a 100 acre tract. It belonged to the Sarasota-Bradenton airport and was situated southeast of the air field around the intersection of DeSoto and Old Bradenton Roads. Because the show needed to start vacating the old quarters, Concello gave the combined Chambers of Commerce thirty days to find a suitable site.¹¹⁴ The buck then passed to the Sarasota-Manatee Airport Authority.

Concello's "thirty days or else" ultimatum did not sit well with some. Sarasota *Herald Tribune* editorial writer Stan Windhorn found it to be the height of arrogant audacity. He



pointed out that nobody made the circus quit its old quarters and that despite having pocketed an enormous profit on land given it by Sarasotans, it now wanted another free ride at the expense of the public.¹¹⁵ Attitudes toward the circus were not helped by the fact that, in his November 17th interview, Concello had come across as cold and heartless with regard to the old place, almost describing it as a good riddance. He stated that it was he who had negotiated the sale to Arvida and that John Ringling North had nothing to do with it except to ask him whether the show still needed the place. To that Concello answered, "No!"¹¹⁶ His position, though harsh sounding, was only typical of the strictly business approach.

At some point during the dance with the Sarasota-Bradenton airport, Concello suggested to the terminal manager, Matt Pilcher, that the 100 acres be leased to the circus for a dollar per acre per year! That did not warm Pilcher's heart at all. He stated that there was not enough unleased land available and that to assemble the acreage desired by the circus would mean terminating existing tenants. Substituting Concello's \$100 annual rental for that already assured from others would cost the Authority \$40,000 per year.¹¹⁷

On December 8th a committee from the Airport Authority met further with Concello. The showman advised that the circus could not get the backing necessary for the theme park and was now interested only in ten to twelve acres for a circus winter quarters consisting of railroad access, a costume shop, and possibly a rehearsal building. That focused attention on eleven acres owned by the airport on its eastern side. It lay to the east of, but did not abut, U. S. 301 (where it ran back then) and was alongside the Seaboard Air Line's main north-south line. Annual rental, however, became a sticking point. The Airport Authority wanted

The train that Circus World Museum purchased from Ringling in 1959. En route to Baraboo, Wisconsin in 1959 were the laundry car, a stock car, and two flats loaded with wagons. Pfening Archives.

ed \$1,000 per acre while Concello held out for \$100, a mere ten fold difference.

December 17, 1959 was Concello's deadline to the Chambers of Commerce. That day he sent a telegram to the Airport Authority demanding that they make an immediate decision on his \$100 per acre offer for the eleven acres. When it appeared that the Authority would not meet for several more days, Concello took action that forever foreclosed Sarasota as a site for Ringling's winter quarters. He decided to move the circus to Venice.¹¹⁸

ALL EYES ON VENICE

Venice came from nowhere to land the Big Show. Despite its having hosted Sparks twelve years earlier, it does not seem to have been in the Ringling game until on or about December 17, 1959.

The person chiefly responsible for the deal was W. N. "Bud" Wimmers, the newly elected President of the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce. A realtor, we met him in the previous installment as the one time Assistant Treasurer of Venice's B.L.E. Realty, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineer's development company. When it folded in 1929, Wimmer was appointed receiver to dispose of its assets. Always a Venice promoter, he had been instrumental in Kentucky Military Institute's opening its winter campus in Venice in January, 1933 (not 1932 as we wrote in Part I). Now, Wimmers set his sights on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey.¹¹⁹

Bud Wimmers had long been a friend of Ringling's Bill Perry. Both had been active in boosting Sarasota County. On December 17th, the day that Art Concello's thirty day deadline to the Bradenton and Sarasota Chambers of Commerce expired, Wimmers went into action. He got in touch with Bill Perry

and Venice Mayor Smyth D. Brohard suggesting that Ringling move to Venice's airport. The next day (18th) an informal meeting was held between the Mayor, City Council, and Art Concello. They reached a tentative agreement. On Saturday, December 19, 1959 a press conference was called and the deal was made public.¹²⁰

In January, 1960 a written lease was approved by both parties and needed only formal execution. It was put on the agenda for the City Council's regular meeting on January 26th. Councilperson Blanche J. Celli moved approval. However, a local realtor, Finn W. Casperson, objected to hasty action, suggesting that there be a two week delay so that the terms could be reviewed by the public. Councilman H. H. "Pete" Britton agreed and requested a delay. However, Councilperson Celli refused to change her motion, and it was unanimously approved. The next day it was signed by the Mayor and City Clerk¹²¹ and was then forwarded to New York for execution there by John Ringling North and Art Concello, both of whom had just flown back to the Big Apple from Paris.¹²²

The agreement provided that the circus would lease fifteen acres of undeveloped airport property for a term of thirty years with a renewal option for another twenty. The acreage faced onto U.S. Highway 41 (Tamiami Trail) and lay to the north of a road running into the airport as a continuation of Center Road. As readers will recall from the sketch in Part I, this was the very same spot upon which the Sparks Circus had pitched its big top in the spring of 1947. For the fifteen acres, Ringling was to pay rent of \$1,000 per year for each of the initial 30 years plus each of the additional 20 years if the show exercised its option for same.¹²³ Incredibly, there were no provisions for upward adjustment. Talk about a sweetheart deal!

Some other provisions of the agree-

ment merit comment. The site was to be used only as a circus and exhibit grounds and no unlawful or improper use was to be made thereof. The winter quarters were to be open to the public during the annual rehearsals. (That became a real sticking point when Irvin Feld closed the quarters to the public beginning with the winter of 1968-1969.) Except for the office which Ringling then had in New York's Madison Square Garden, and "when the show is exhibiting elsewhere," Venice was to be the only site for general offices and winter quarters. Borrowing a page from John Ringling's 1927 deal with Sarasota County, the circus was to advertise that Venice was its headquarters and winter home.¹²⁴

The show was to immediately commence construction of appropriate winter quarters buildings, including an arena with a capacity of some 5,000 spectators, and all such improvements were to become the property of the landlord. Ringling was, at its expense, to have a railroad spur built into the winter quarters with a capacity for storing 25 railroad cars on the premises. (As we shall see, that was subsequently barred by the federal government.) No house trailers were to be installed and occupied except for those of animal trainers when the show was in quarters for rehearsals. Moreover, no animals other than horses were to be kept on the premises except during the annual rehearsals unless specifically authorized by City Council. (This too would become a point of future controversy.)¹²⁵

The agreement also granted Ringling the right of first refusal to lease an additional eighty acres of airport property adjoining the winter quarters on the eastern and southern sides of the airport. This was to accommodate what, at the press conference back in December, Art Concello had described as a potential site for a million dollar circus theme park running along U.S. 41.¹²⁶

In the evening following the signing of the agreement by the City, Ringling's Bill Perry addressed the 30th annual banquet of the Venice Area Chamber of Commerce with 300 in attendance.¹²⁷ Perry was an excellent speaker. He had a deep, rich voice to which your writer can testify as he heard him introduce the performance of the Moscow Circus at Atlanta's Omni on May 25, 1979.

At the Chamber's banquet, Perry



Bill Perry (l) and an unidentified man surveying circus winter quarters site in Venice, Florida in 1960. Circus World Museum collection.

made a so-called first public announcement of the show's return to the rails. (That would have been new news only to those Venetians who had not read *Billboard*. It broke the story two months earlier.) Perry also alluded to the companion theme park that Concello had mentioned in connection with Venice. Perry named it "Ringlingland," said it was still on the drawing board, and that the show hoped to build it in Venice.¹²⁸

The idea of a circus theme park was a recurring Ringling proposal around this time. It was no doubt inspired by the incredible success of Disneyland which opened in Anaheim, California in 1955. Show designer Max Weldy talked to the Sarasota press on July 17, 1956 about making the Ringling winter quarters into a new park. That was the day after the big top had come down forever in Pittsburgh. In light of the show's dire circumstances at that moment, plans for expansion hardly seemed realistic. Yet, Weldy mentioned an attraction for children and a new zoological garden to be built in the northeastern quadrant of the Sarasota property featuring waterfalls and pools for elephants. There were rumors of vacation packages to attract people from here and abroad to see ongoing circus performances.¹²⁹

As bad as things were for the Big Show in 1955 and 1956, money was being spent on winter quarters enhancement. While the show was on the road in 1955, the old giraffe barn had been converted into a new exhibit for those animals, as well as zebras, with new pens being constructed on the southern

side of the building. Additionally, the baby elephant barn was fancified as a nursery school for the punks.¹³⁰ As the catastrophic 1956 season unfurled, there was more work. Large pools were said to have been built for rhinoceroses and alligators. And, even while the show was on the way back from Pittsburgh, workers were busy inside the menagerie building. Eighteen of its cages were said to have been repaired. Their previous drabness had been alleviated with a jungle motif.¹³¹ It was similar to the decorations used in the traveling menageries of 1949 and following years.

We saw earlier how Concello had held out the prospect of a circus theme park in his initial proposal (November, 1959) for the Sarasota-Bradenton airport site. That plum was now being dangled down Venice way. This would explain, at least in part, why so many big top era railroad cars, wagons, and props were taken down there rather than being sold or junked before vacating Sarasota.

Talk of a circus amusement park for Venice persisted for several years after the show landed there. However, it fell to the Felds to finally build one, only it was not at Venice. Their short lived Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus World was opened in 1974 alongside Interstate Highway 4, south of Orlando and near Haines City, Florida. But, that is a story for another day, and we must first move the show to Venice.

NOTES

The decline and fall of Ringling-Barnum's tented enterprise, the reasons therefor, and its resurrection as an indoor and stadium circus have been thoroughly explored. Books treating those subjects and relied upon here are (a) Ernest Albrecht, *A Ringling By Any Other Name-The Story of John Ringling North and His Circus*, The Scarecrow Press, Inc., Metuchen, NJ (1989), which, for brevity, will be referred to in the numbered notes as "Albrecht;" (b) Michael Burke, *Outrageous Good Fortune*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston-Toronto (1984), hereafter "Burke;" (c) David Lewis Hammarstrom, *Big Top Boss-John Ringling North and His Circus*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago (1992), hereafter "Hammarstrom;" and Henry Ringling North and Alden Hatch *The Circus Kings*, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, NY (1960), hereafter "Henry North."

Papers dealing with the subject and cited here are (a) Sverre and Faye O. Braathen, "The End Of An Era," *White Tops*, July-August, 1973, pp 12-24, referred to in the

numbered notes as "Braathen;" (b) Joseph T. Bradbury, "Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus, Season of 1954," "... Season of 1955," and "... Season of 1956," histories of each of those seasons, each comprised of three parts, the whole being published in nine consecutive issues of *White Tops* from November-December, 1989 through March-April, 1991, hereafter referred to as "JTB (with reference to the particular issue);" and (c) Fred D. Pfening Jr., "Ringling Barnum on Trucks-Season of 1957," *Bandwagon*, July-August, 1994, hereafter "Pfening 1994." Both the Bradbury and Pfening papers relied extensively on *Billboard*.

Frequently cited journals and periodicals will be referenced with these abbreviations: *Bandwagon* ("BW"), *Billboard* ("BB"), *Sarasota* (Florida) *Herald-Tribune* ("SHT"), *Venice* (Florida) *Gondolier* ("VG"), and *White Tops* ("WT").

References to the Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin will be "CWM collections."

1. VG, March 25, 1965, p. 14
2. Chris Audibert, *Rubin & Cherry*, Midway Museum Publications, Nashua, NH (1989) p. 73; Bob Goldsack, *Those Wonderful, Colorful and Exciting Carnival Trains*, Midway Museum Publications, Nashua, NH (1991), p. 83; and Joe McKennon, *A Pictorial History Of The American Carnival*, Carnival Publishers of Sarasota (1972), Vol. I, p. 154, and Vol. II, pp. 75 and 121.
3. McKennon, *op cit*, Vol. II, p. 75.
4. BB, 1947: March 29, p. 46; May 17, p. 54; and May 24, p. 58. According to carnival historian, Bob Goldsack, in litt. August 28, 1995, it is difficult to determine which of the carnival trains (Cavalcade of America or Royal American) was the longest in 1946 and 1947. He has information that Royal American was on 60 cars in 1946 and 1947 which would have made it larger than the Cavalcade (50 cars per McKennon). Goldsack noted that over the years Al Wagner fed a lot of inflated information to *Billboard* and that Sedlmayr's Royal American press boys were not above suspicion
5. BB, March 29, 1947, p. 46
6. Joseph T. Bradbury, "The New Cole Bros. Circus-Season of 1949," BW, May-June, 1980, p. 4.
7. Burke, pp. 131-132.
8. BB, April 19, 1947, p. 50.
9. BB, 1947: March 29, p. 46; April 5, p. 52; and May 3, p. 52.
10. BB, December, 1945: 8th, p. 53, and 15th, p. 44; and BB, 1947: January 18, p. 56 and April 12, p. 64.
11. BB, 1947, April 19, p. 50 and May 3, pp. 52 and 58.
12. BB, October 4, 1947, p. 40
13. BB, September 6, 1947, p. 69 and VG, March 25, 1965, p. 14.
14. VG, October 3, 1947, p. 1.
15. *Ibid*.
16. *Ibid*.
17. BB, October 11, 1947, p. 66.
18. BB, 1947: October 25, p. 55 and November 1, p. 60.
19. BB, 1947: October 18, p. 70 and November 1, p. 60.
20. BB, November 1, 1947, p. 60.
21. VG, March 25, 1965, p. 14.

22. See note 14, above.

23. *The Official Guide of the Railways* (monthly), National Railway Publication Company, New York. As examples of Seaboard's Venice service via the "Camellia" and the "Silver Meteor," see the issues for August, 1947 (pp. 600-601) and May, 1955 (pp. 615-616), respectively. For discontinuance of rail passenger service to Venice upon the coming of Amtrak, see VG, April 26 and 29, 1971.

24. See note 21, above.
25. See note 14, above.
26. See note 20, above.
27. BB, April 17 and 24 (p.53), 1954. See also McKennon (Vol. I, p. 165) and Goldsack, both cited in note 2, above.
28. For an excellent discourse on the 1950s and the cultural and societal forces unleashed during that decade, see: David Halberstram, *The Fifties*, Villard Books, New York (1993).
29. See the books and papers cited in the first two paragraphs of these notes, supra.
30. Henry North, pp. 360-365.
31. The lowlives among the workers picked up by the Ringling circus in the early 1950s are described in detail in Edward M. Hoaglund's *Cat Man*, Houghton Mifflin, pocket edition, Signet Books, New York (1958), a novel based on the author's observations while traveling with the Big Show in the early 1950s. Though fictional names are assigned to the characters, the real names of several well known Ringling animals are used. Also, see: Hammarstrom, pp. 132-133 and E. J. Albrecht, "Miles White-The Little Eccentric With the Big Talent," BW, November-December, 1993, p. 50 at 57.
32. Hammarstrom, pp. 182-186.
33. Albrecht, pp. 170-174, 179-180, 196-216, and 221; and Hammarstrom, pp. 184 and 193.
34. The Sneez Mob, the identities of its principals, and the practices they promoted are all well documented. See: Albrecht, pp. 172-173; Burke, pp. 182-185; and Hammarstrom, pp. 128-133 and 209-210. Bill Ballantine also described the rackets in his *Clown Alley*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston/Toronto (1982), pp. 21-22.
35. Hammarstrom, pp. 129-130.
36. Albrecht, p. 172 and Hammarstrom, p. 196.
37. John Staley, in his posthumous "The Circus Steward-Part V," BW, September-October, 1995, p. 25 at 29, described how, as far back as 1919, Ringling-Barnum's ushers were selling extra seats and pocketing the money. "Kid" Harris, in his "The Grafting Circus, an Expose," (also posthumously published) BW, July-August, 1995, p. 22, explained in detail how certain circuses of the 1920s (Ringling and Sparks expressly excepted) encouraged the operation of rackets, including gambling and whiskey for show personnel.
38. Hammarstrom, p. 210.
39. *Ibid*, pp. 192-194.



Chevrolet tractor No. 230 with drop frame semi-trailer No. 130 on the truck show in Atlanta, Georgia in July 1959. Marlin Weaver collection.

40. JTB, N-D 1989, p. 40.
41. JTB, M-J 1990, p. 35.
42. Burke, pp. 97-102, 135-141, and 168-169; Hammarstrom, p. 22, and Henry North, pp. 324-325 and 366. Also: Anonymous, "New RBBB Executive Has Storybook Career," *Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus-1955 Route Book*, RBBB, Sarasota, pp. 29-31.
43. Albrecht, pp. 235-236 and 252-253; JTB, M/J 1990, pp. 30-31, and 33, and J/A 1990, pp. 27-32; and Hammarstrom, pp. 200-203, 207-210, and 214-215.
44. Albrecht, p. 237; Burke, p. 182-185; and Hammarstrom pp. 129, 209, and 219.
45. Burke, pp. 183-188 and Hammarstrom pp. 188-190.
46. Burke, pp. 188-190.
47. Burke, pp. 190-191 and JTB, S-O 1990, pp. 39-41.
48. Albrecht, p. 242; Braathen, p. 21; Hammarstrom, pp. 220 and 222; and JTB, N-D 1990, pp. 55-65.
49. *Ibid*. Also, interview with C. R. Montgomery, August 22, 1966.
50. Burke, p. 196-198.
51. See note 48, above.
52. Albrecht, pp. 234 and 244-245; Burke, p. 199; Hammarstrom, pp. 206 and 221-222; and JTB, N-D 1990, pp. 67-69, and J-F 1991, pp. 31-32.
53. JTB, J-F 1991, p. 33. Also: Gary M. Fink, *Biographical Dictionary of American Labor*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT (1984), pp. 105 and 299.
54. Burke, p. 201.
55. Reciting this litany of trouble, we cannot help but observe how now, forty years later, pickets again confront the Greatest Show On Earth and other circuses under the banner of "animal rights." Thus far the present demonstrators have not been given to the obviously indefensible, two fisted thuggery of the Hoffa mindset with its mercenary and venal objectives. No, the present picketers are motivated by precepts of assumed ethical correctness grounded upon trendy notions of "victimization"-in this case circus animals. They are into control and power. Those who do not agree with them are to be brought to heel by propagandizing the educational system and the media to the end that entertainment use of animals be proscribed by governmental sanctions.

56. See note 54, above. Also, Hammarstrom, p. 223.

57. JTB, N-D 1990, p. 67, and J-F 1991, pp. 33, 35, and 37-38. Also: Interview with David G. Mullaney, November, 15, 1968; he was assistant menagerie superintendent in 1956 and witnessed the chaos that accompanied the unloading of the stock cars that year.

58. There has been some confusion over the exact number of elephants carried on the road in 1956. The William Woodcock files (relied upon by JTB, N-D 1990, p. 63) listed 50 on the road with 4 remaining in Sarasota. BB, April 7, 1956, gave the totals as 52 for the road and 4 back at quarters. The actual count, however, was 46 for the road with 5 left behind. That is established by two elephant lists compiled by RBBB at different times in 1956 plus a veterinary inspection certificate dated March 28, 1956. The African forest elephant Abele (Emily) died in New York so that there were only 45 elephants with Ringling for its 1956 under canvas tour.

59. Braathen, pp. 22-23.

60. *Ibid.* Also: Burke, pp. 201-202 and JTB, J-F 1991, pp. 38-39.

61. Hammarstrom, pp. 224-225 and JTB, M-A 1991, pp. 34-35. See also: Fred D. Pfening Jr., "The Big One Closes in Mid-Season," WT, July-August, 1956, p. 9.

62. Albrecht, p. 249 and Hammarstrom, pp. 225-227.

63. Rudy Bundy discussion with the author on December 10, 1994. Burke, p. 198, gave the name of North's French chef.

64. Twenty-one cars (1 stock, 14 flats and 6 coaches) left Sarasota on July 4, 1938 to join the Barnes circus. On July 22nd, an additional 3 cars (1 flat and 2 coaches) were sent to Barnes from Sarasota, making a total of 24 cars from RBBB to Barnes. This is established by 1938 records kept by then RBBB General Manager George W. Smith and now in the Pfening Archives, Columbus, Ohio.

65. Associated Press wirephoto dated in Sarasota on July 19, 1956. Also: Hammarstrom, pp. 233-234 and Pfening, 1994, pp. 4-5.

Circus historians Howard Tibbals and Harold Dunn visited Sarasota winter quarters in June, 1959. They found the refrigerator wagon (dining department No. 4) stored in the railroad car repair barn. Opening the rear doors, they saw what, at first glance, appeared to be manure lying on the floor. Closer inspection revealed that it was decayed meat that had fallen off the sides of hanging beef. The wagon had not been unloaded since July, 1956 when it got back to Sarasota. The meat had simply rotted and fallen off the bones and onto the floor. Because it had been there three years, there was no odor! (Tibbals interview, September 22, 1995).

66. Albrecht, pp. 280-285 and Hammarstrom, pp. 234-235 and 244-245.

67. Hammarstrom, pp. 224-225.

68. Albrecht, pp. 270-271; Hammarstrom, pp. 236-237; and JTB, M-A 1991, pp. 37-38.

As part of his agreement to return to Ringling, Concello may also have obtained a 10% interest in the circus. Hammarstrom,



John Ringling North and his savior Art Concello. Pfening Archives.

Ibid. said that he did, whereas Albrecht, *Ibid.* suggested that he did not. Concello himself is alleged to have told the late circus historian Tom Parkinson that he (Concello) did in fact get 10%, that it came out of John North's shares (51% of all the Ringling stock), and that he later re-sold it to North.

69. Pfening, 1994, p. 4.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 13. The 1959 truck count is from a list made by Margaret M. Moreau of Niagara Falls, New York.

71. Pfening, 1994, p. 8; SHT, March 28, 1957, p. 36; and Tampa Morning News, March, 29, 1957. Also: contract between RBBB and Seaboard Air Line for returning 15 cars to Sarasota in May, 1957.

72. All New York openings were at Madison Square Garden except those of 1929 and 1930. For those two years the show first played up in the Bronx, indoors at the Coliseum, before moving downtown to the Garden. See: BB March 30, 1929, p. 29 and April 5, 1930.

73. William B. Hall, "Animal Scarcity Marks Ringling's Menagerie," WT, July-August, 1958, p. 29; BB, May 19, 1958, p. 46; Paul Eagles memo (May 15, 1959) re storing 4 flat cars with New York Central; and Rudy Bundy to Supt. of Madison Square Garden, in litt. July 8, 1961, with data on the tractor.

74. BB, 1958: April 7, p. 55; May 5, p. 12; and May 19, p. 57.

75. Arthur M. Concello to Harold Genders, in litt. April 21, 1958, re sending the gorilla cage to Royal American on a flat car. Also: BB, May, 1958: 5th, p. 12 and 19th, pp. 56 and 58.

76. Sarasota News, March 1, 1958 and BB, May 26, 1958, p. 60.

The names of the animals are from numerous sources including interviews with former Ringling menagerie boss C. R. Montgomery (August 22, 1966) and former Ringling veterinarian Dr. William Y. Higgins (February 3 and 25, 1966).

77. BB, 1958: April 7, p. 55 and May 26, p. 60. Also: May 5, 1960 contract between RBBB and Zoorama.

Correspondence between Arthur M. Concello, Lewis Rosen, City of Pawtucket, Bob Dietch, and V. D. Rider Jr. establishes that, at the close of the 1959 Madison Square Garden date, the adult giraffe, Ingrid, and the hippo, Chester, did not return to Pawtucket. Rather, they were sent to Dietch's Kiddie Zoo along with the cage wagons that had been at the Garden that spring.

78. Two giraffes, mother Ingrid and her calf Susie, went to Pawtucket in May, 1958, both riding in No. 83. However, on the return run to New York in March, 1959, only Ingrid was in the wagon. Undoubtedly, that was because calf Susie had grown so large during her ten months in Rhode Island that it would have been unwise to ship both in the same wagon. Hence, Susie stayed behind in Pawtucket while her mother made the 1959 date in New York city. Later, in September, 1959, Susie was shipped to Zoorama, New Market, VA, where she stayed into 1960.

79. Autopsy report by Edward K. Wojciehowski, D.V.M., Pawtucket, December 20, 1958.

80. BB, May 18, 1959, p. 50; memo (May 15, 1959) by RBBB's Paul Eagles; C. B. Fleming of New York Central to Paul Eagles, in litt. July 9, 1959; and November 13, 1959 Sarasota news clipping (publisher unidentified) re the return of the gorillas to Sarasota at the end of Royal American's season (CWM collections, album SBK 39).

81. William W. Perry's notes, December, 1961.

82. Tom Parkinson and Charles Phillip Fox, *The Circus Moves By Rail*, Pruett Publishing, Boulder, CO (1978), pp. 287 and 294. Also: Pfening, 1994, pp. 11-12. On page 12 Pfening said that three system passenger cars carried the personnel in 1957. In 1959, however, various railroad contracts with RBBB show that only two system coaches were used for personnel.

83. New York Clipper, July 16, 1898, p. 321.

84. Albrecht, pp. 274-278 and Hammarstrom, pp. 240-244 and 246-247.

The author saw the show in Atlanta in July, 1958, an outdoor date played on the diamond at well worn Ponce de Leon Baseball Park. He found it sadly lacking in comparison to his memories of by-gone days.

85. Tampa Tribune, February 25, 1958. For comparison of the lengths of winter stays at the Sarasota quarters from 1927 to 1960 see: *Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus-1968 Route Book*, RBBB, Washington, D.C. (1968).

86. Albrecht, pp. 284-285. Also: BB, 1958: February 24, p. 47 and March 10, p. 68.

87. BB, April 7, 1958, p. 57; and RBBB bills of sale for animals beginning in March, 1958. Also: C. R. Montgomery interview, cited in note 76, above. Montgomery had quit RBBB in 1956 but was subsequently re-employed.

88. Anonymous, "Circus Animals Bid City Adios," Sarasota Journal, July 24, 1958; and September 2, 1958 Sarasota news clipping (publisher unidentified) in

Ringling Museum of the Circus, Sarasota. Also: Memphis zoo records establish the arrival of the hippo and rhino on the same date.

89. Gene Plowden, "Deserted Circus Site Sad Place," *WT*, November-December, 1958, p. 12.

90. "Investigation Re Ringling Bros.-Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows, Winter Quarters, Sarasota, Florida," a report by Thomas M. Burton Detective Agency to Arthur M. Concello dated May 3, 1959.

91. *Ibid.*

92. Correspondence between A. M. Concello and John Seawell in June, 1959. Also: *BB*, August 17, 1959, p. 45.

93. William W. Perry to James C. Ringling, in litt. June 26, 1959.

Writing in *BB* (November 9, 1959), Tom Parkinson said that the Ringling Board of Directors okayed the sale of equipment in August, 1959. However, a June 17, 1959 memo from Concello to Seawell plainly stated, "... the stockholders have agreed that William Perry will be in charge of (equipment) sales." From that we conclude that the Forty-niners gave their consent in June. Moreover, bills and reports show that the sales began that month.

94. *SHT*, August 8, 1990 (Perry's obituary); "Perry (William W.) Starts Campaign For State Senate," ca. 1946 news clipping (publisher unidentified) in archives at Sarasota County Historical Resources. [Perry does not appear to have won his bid for the Florida Senate.] Also: "Mrs. Perry, Pioneer Is Dead At 69," *Sarasota Journal*, May 7, 1952 (obituary for Wm. Perry's mother).

95. *Ibid.* Also: Alva Johnson interview, September 5, 1995.

96. See note 94, above.

97. Alva Johnson interview, September 5, 1995.

98. Howard Tibbals, interview cited in note 65, above.

99. Arthur M. Concello interview, September 6, 1995.

100. CWM collections, biographical files.

101. Ernest Albrecht interview, September 10, 1995. Also: see note 97, above.

102. William W. Perry to Jack Goodman, in litt. July 8, 1961.

103. James Dunwoody, in litt. September 6, 1995. Also: See note 97, above, and *SHT* cited in note 94, above.

104. RBBB bills of sale from 1959-60. Also: *BB*, October 26, 1959, p. 60.

105. Anonymous, "Arthur Vining Davis, Industrialist, Is Dead at 95," *New York Times*, November 18, 1962, p. 86; John A. Garrity, editor, *Dictionary of American Biography*, Supplement 7, 1961-1965, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York (1981-American Council of Learned Societies), pp. 166-167; and information from the office of the President, Arvida Corporation, August 21, 1995.

106. Arvida Corporation cited in note 105, above.

107. Albrecht, pp. 201-203, 214, and 287; *BB*, June 1, 1959, p. 58; Henry North, pp. 338-343; *Sarasota Journal*, November 3, 1959; and *SHT*, November 19, 1959, p. 2.

108. Anonymous, "Arvida Purchases Circus Quarters," *Sarasota Journal*, November 3, 1959, pp. 1-2.

109. *SHT*, October 21, 1958. Also: David C. Weeks, *Ringling: The Florida Years. 1911-1936*, University Press, Gainesville, FL (1993), p. 152.

110. Anonymous, "County Drops Injunction Move On Ringling Circus," *Tampa Tribune*, January 15, 1960; Henry P. Trawick Jr., "Recalling the Circus-County Dispute," undated news clipping (publisher unidentified) at Ringling Museum of the Circus, Sarasota; and *SHT*, November 19, 1959. Also: Weeks, pp. 150-152, cited in note 109, above.

111. *BB*, November 9, 1959, p. 56.

112. *BB*, November 23, 1959, p. 52.

113. A. J. Ruttenber, "Circus Ponders Shifting Winter Home Elsewhere," *Sarasota News*, November 17, 1959, p. 1. Also: *Sarasota News*, December 20, 1959, p. 1.

114. *SHT*, November 19, 1959 and *Sarasota News*, December 17, 1959, p. 1.

115. Stan Windhorn, "Rich and Homeless," *SHT*, November 23, 1959.

116. Ruttenber, cited in note 113, above.

117. *SHT*, December 17, 1959, p. 2 and *Sarasota Journal*, December 17, 1959, p. 3.

118. *Sarasota News*, December 17 and 20,

1959.

Arthur Concello subsequently moved his personal quarters to the area east of the Sarasota-Bradenton airport. On a siding just off U.S. Highway 301, behind the airport, he installed his three private railroad cars, built a shed over them, and constructed an adjacent office-storage building. (See: Joseph T. Bradbury, "A Recent Visit To Sarasota," *WT*, September-October, 1967, p. 9 with photo of the setup on p. 10). The location was very near the 10 to 12 acre site that, in December, 1959, Concello had proposed as a winter quarters for the Ringling circus.

119. *VG*, December 24, 1959, p. 1.

120. *Ibid.* Also: *Sarasota News*, December 20, 1959 and *VG*, January 7, 1965, p. 2-E.

121. Anonymous, "Lease Making Venice the Winter Quarters for Ringling Is Signed," *VG*, January 28, 1960, p. 1.

122. Anonymous, "Circus Is To Return To Trains With Venice on Silver Cars," *VG*, January 28, 1960, p. 1.

123. See notes 119 and 121, above.

124. See note 121, *supra*. Also: *VG*, November 25, 1968, p. 1 and January 14, 1971.

125. *Ibid.*

126. See notes 119 and 121, *supra*.

127. See note 122, above.

128. *Ibid.* Also: notes 111 and 112, above.

129. *SHT*, July 18, 1956, p. 2.

130. The new giraffe/zebra pens and the elephant nursery are shown in *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus*, Taylor Publishing Co., Dallas, TX (1956), a picture book published by RBBB for sale during its 1956 season with photos taken at quarters during the winter of 1955-56.

131. There is some question as to just when (1955 or 1956) the jungle motif was installed inside the Sarasota menagerie building. *BB*, December 3, 1955, p. 76, said, "Cages are being painted and decorated with jungle scenes." However, *SHT*, July 18, 1956, p. 2, stated, "Repairs have been made to 18 cages since the circus left on its ... tour."

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

THE CIRCUS MUSEUM OF The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art

5401 Bay Shore Rd.
Sarasota, Florida 34243

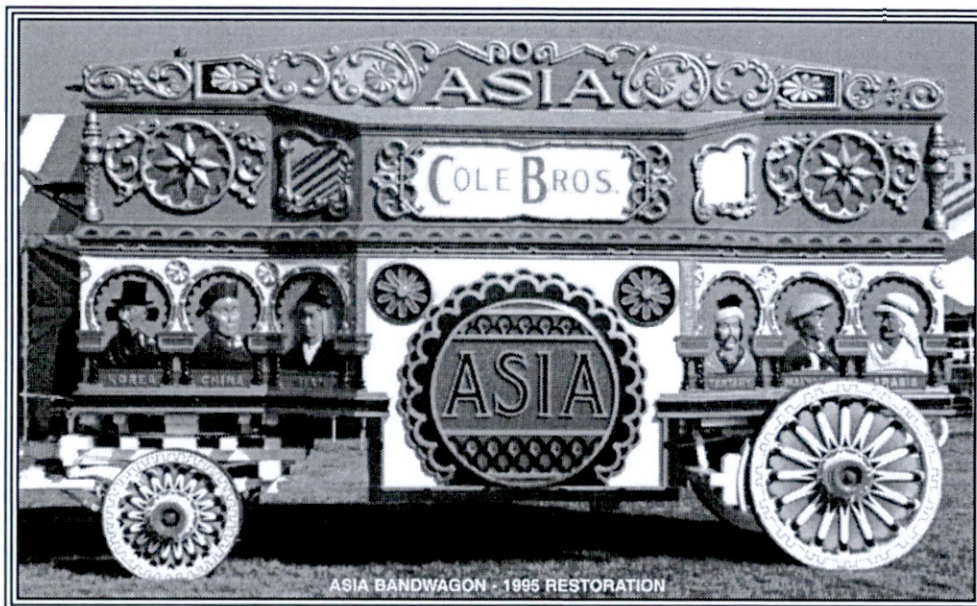


THE ROYAL HANNEFORD CIRCUS

Season's Greetings
to our Circus Friends
Everywhere

**Tommy, Struppi and Nellie
Hanneford**

Season's Greetings



From The Staff



OWNED BY THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WISCONSIN

1935

Motorized circuses parading in 1935 included Downie Bros., Barnett Bros., Tom Mix, Mighty Haag, Bailey Bros. (later Harley Sadler-Bailey Bros.), and still later Goldmar Bros.; Bays Bros. (later Rice Bros.), Hunt Bros., Barney Bros., Fowler Bros., and Seils-Sterling.

The 1935 season saw the largest number of truck shows parading during the entire decade. However, it was the "last hurrah" for the motor circus march. The three largest shows, Downie, Barnett, and Mix, all began the season featuring parades, but Mix quit about mid-season. Barnett Bros. down-sized its show in mid-season, but retained the parade for the remainder of the tour. Downie opened and closed with an excellent parade. In 1936 all three permanently dispensed with their parades.

Downie's parade was on a par with those of the previous year. A few weeks after the author had seen it the show purchased four of the famed Coca Cola elephants from Asa W. Candler, who had kept them in his large private zoo in Atlanta, Georgia. This addition now gave Downie Bros. a total of nine elephants, which matched the number that Barnett Bros. featured in 1934.

It was my pleasure to witness the Downie parade in my Athens, Georgia hometown on April 18, 1935, the second stand of the new season. I was then in high school on Prince Avenue and saw the march directly across the street from where I stood while in junior high to witness the Downie parade in 1933. The school's front yard was somewhat elevated, making it an excellent viewing place. Although I didn't make a complete list of the units in the march I did make some notes. The big show band again rode in the semi with Washington Crossing the Delaware painting and the Ben Hur semi, which I recorded as Roman Chariot

The Downie Bros. Washington Crossing the Delaware tableau semi. Pfening Archives.



TRUCK CIRCUS PARADES FROM 1930 TO 1939

Part Two

By Joseph T. Bradbury

Racing, carried a trampoline upon which costumed actors performed. Four Asiatic two humped camels, five elephants, and the air calliope brought up the rear. Actually, the units were essentially the same as I had remembered from 1933. One difference, western screen star Bill Cody, the feature attraction of the show, was there riding in his coupe which pulled his horse trailer. I didn't record the number of cages in the parade but did a while later in the menagerie. The list included nine cages containing 3 lions, 4 sea lions, 1 tiger, 2 leopards, 2 jaguars, monkeys, 1 bear, 1

hyena, and 1 kangaroo. I feel sure at least eight of the large two-den straight truck cages paraded, but I am not sure about the sea lion den which was privately owned. It probably didn't as no photos showing it in parade have turned up. As was the custom we students were released from class to see the parade and then about 1:30 p. m. were dismissed early to attend the matinee. I then walked rapidly to the Hillcrest Avenue lot for the matinee performance.

Roger Boyd's movie of the 1935 Downie parade pictures it led by two mounted flag bearers and two additional girl riders. Then came the Washington big show band semi. The film is not complete but shows a cage, Bill Cody in his auto, the clown band on a straight truck, and five elephants. One would

wish it had been taken only a short time later with all nine bulls.

Billboard (4-20-35) reported Barnett Bros. paraded with nine new parade tableau units and thirty-four mounted people. The *Showman's Bible* (9-7-35) said it had elephants, a camel, and was moving on forty-seven units. The parade should have been about the same as the previous season except there were now only four elephants in parade, the

101 Ranch herd of five having gone to the new Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Railroad Circus. The parade was probably not adversely affected when the show cut down in size in mid summer, about the same time Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty reduced its train from thirty-five to thirty cars.

The Tom Mix Circus opened at Compton, California and the parade was witnessed by thousands (3-16-35 BB). A *Billboard* representative rode the parade route and wrote that the parade was all that had been promis-



Nine elephants in a 1935 Downie Bros. parade. Author's collection.

ed. New trappings and trucks done in outstanding colors, especially tableau No. 7, the Progress and Spirit of U.S., with great pictorial work and decorations. Four bands and an air calliope were in the parade. Photos show the big show band riding on the aforementioned semi and a single elephant riding the route in a semi. The cages were well painted and lettered

The Downie Bros. Ben Hur Chariot Race semi tableau. Pfening Archives.





The big show band semi-trailer in a 1935 Tom Mix Circus parade. Author's collection.

in the Mix red, white, and blue color scheme. All of the straight bed cages went back to Gentry Bros. in 1930.

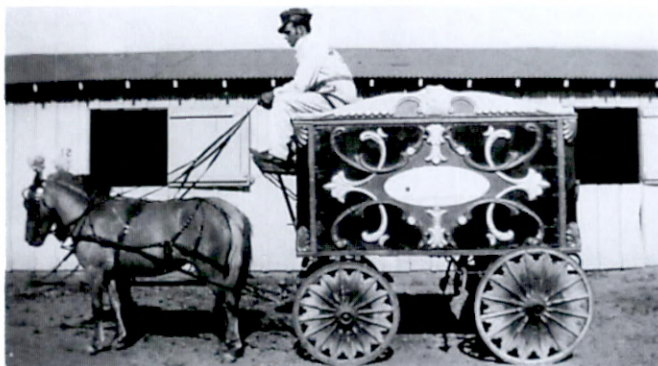
Mix ceased parading somewhere in the Mountain states, possibly in Idaho. No mention of it was made in *Billboard* until after the well publicized day and date with Cole Bros. at Sandusky, Ohio when the 8-10-35 issue reported that only Cole paraded that day, Mix having eliminated the march earlier.

Photos show the Mix big show band on a large well-decorated semi. The No. 2 band also rode in a semi, while another large semi had costumed performers. There were numerous riders and a beautifully painted straight-bed horse truck.

Mighty Haag paraded, but drew little press in the trade publication. It was reported, however, that the show gave the first parade in Calhoun, Georgia in several years (9-28-35 BB).

Bailey Bros., a new show owned by Phil Isley, paraded. A feature of the march was several small cross cages wagons pulled by ponies. These had been on Christy Bros. railroad circus until 1930 and were on the Christy-owned Lee Bros. trucker where they paraded in 1934. There was also a pony-drawn air calliope mounted in a former cage. The bands rode on semis. Originally it was planned to use an old chariot type bandwagon, claimed to have once been on Great

A former Gentry pony cage on Bailey Bros. Circus in 1935. Pfening Archives.



Wallace and for sure later on Norris & Rowe. However, it was found to be in too poor condition to travel and was left in quarters. It might be mentioned that later Frank Walters got the old band chariot, restored it, added pneumatic tires, and it eventually led the last parades of a railroad circus, that of Clyde Beatty's, for a short time in 1954.

After Bailey closed a few weeks into the season, Harley Sadler bought the equipment and resumed the tour under the Harley Sadler-Bailey Bros. title. The parade was retained. A reviewer listed the following units:

- Mounted flag bearer.
- Big show band (truck).
- Jack Hoxie's wild west mounts.

- Two cages of wild animals (trucks).

- Four mounted people.
- Three miniature pony drawn cages.

- Two mounted people.
- No. 2 band, truck.
- Four mounted people.
- Clown band truck.
- Four miniature cages pony drawn.
- Camels.
- Elephants.
- Air calliope, pony drawn.

After the circus closed in late fall, some of the equipment was leased to a new operator for a tour of several weeks. *Billboard* (12-28-35) said Goldmar Bros. Circus with equipment leased from Sadler opened December 5 at Stockdale, Texas. It moved on ten trucks and gave parades. No details are known about the size of this march but obviously it was considerably smaller than that presented by Sadler.



The single elephant of Tom Mix made the parade in a semi-trailer. Author's collection.

Fred F. Bays bought the Original Gentry Bros. 1934 equipment as the basis of a new circus. The show opened on June 8 giving a parade that included three straight truck cages, two small pony drawn cages and a open-top semi that carried the big show band.



The Bays Bros. Circus big show band parading in 1935. Circus World Museum collection.

Two truck cages, Nos. 64 and 66, had scrolled skyboards with the title on the mudboards. There was a Roman Chariot pulled by 2 horses and an open-roadster car with a costumed performer in the rumble seat. The circus closed in Ann Arbor, Michigan on July 5.

Bays later reorganized and reopened on August 16 using new title Rice Bros. The new owners included Ray

The shell bandwagon is at left with a pony cage on the Bailey-Sadler circus in 1935. Pfening Archives.





Rice Bros. Circus three den cage No. 68 in 1935. Author's collection.

Marsh Bryden and noted wild animal trainer Allen King. King's act had been on the thirty-five car Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus. When that show was reduced to thirty cars in late July, King and his animals along with other animals, parade wagons, and stock returned to the Rochester, Indiana quarters. King shortly thereafter joined the new Rice Bros. show with his wild animal act and six Cole elephants.

Billboard (8-31-35) said the Rice parade had 6 elephants and Allen King's wild animals, 6 male lions, 1 female lion, 3 tigers, 2 black leopards, 17 ponies, 1 camel, 50 dogs, and 10 monkeys.

A July-August 1983 *Bandwagon* article said the Rice parade was headed by Allen King riding a Ford coupe. There were twenty units, including all the caged animals, horses, ponies, elephants, other lead stock, and E. E. Coleman's steam calliope mounted in a semi.

A new air calliope was delivered at Rome, Georgia. Tommy Comstock played it in the parade and with the band in performance (10-12-35 BB). *Billboard* also said Rice had new float covers from the Driver tent company (9-19-35).

Other items from the 1983 *Bandwagon* article noted the Rice Bros. parade had an air calliope, two small

The Rice Bros. bandwagon with the big show band in 1936. Circus World Museum collection.



Cage No. 41 with Allen King's lions on Rice Bros. in 1935. Author's collection.

pony pulled cages, five truck cages, one from Sam Dill's 1930 Gentry Bros. Photos picture Allen King using two straight trucks to load his wild animal act.

It was reported Hunt's Circus would parade (3-9-35 BB). The show had obtained part of Al F. Wheeler's equipment which had been on Almond & Conley in 1934 and other property used by Wheeler on Schell Bros. that same season. Hunt also had a new air calliope and several new parade floats. No further mention of the parade was found.

Barney Bros., managed by Tom Atkinson, gave its first parade of the season at St. Francisville, Louisiana on January 31 (2-16-35 BB). The show used Duggan Bros. equipment purchased several weeks before. A new side show truck had been decorated and carried the big show band in parade while a new band truck was being built. There was a new cage housing a puma and leopard purchased from Rex Ingram.

Billboard (3-9-35) reported Fowler Bros. Circus was being enlarged and would have ten new cages in the menagerie and street parade. The parade was also mentioned in the show's section in *Circus Magazine*. Fowler Bros. had a short season, closing the last week in May. It is assumed some parades were given although none were reported in *Billboard*.

It is believed Seils-Sterling paraded in 1935 as it had in the season before and after. However, no *Billboard* conformation has been found. The trade publication was silent on Seils-Sterling parades even for seasons known to have

featured a march. The parade would have been essentially the same as in 1934 and 1936.

The new Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus was the only railroad show parading daily in 1935. The Hagenbeck-Wallace-Forepaugh-Sells show presented about ten parades in selected stands. Their parade was much smaller than the magnificent daily spectacle of the prior year, but it was still adequate.

1936

Only two motorized circuses paraded in 1936, Rice Bros. (later Dan Rice) and Seils-Sterling.

Billboard (5-23-36), said Rice Bros. with its fine truck equipment, splendid stock, was scoring with the parade. Later in the season the title was changed to Dan Rice Circus (6-13-36 BB). The Allen King wild animals and the Cole Bros. elephants were no longer with the show, so the parade was smaller than the previous year.

Photos picture two well painted and decorated two-den straight truck cages, Nos. 82 and 84. Semi-trailer No. 86 with the title on either side of a large oval center painting also appeared in the march. The big show band rode inside a low-sided semi with the show's title and three oval paintings on the sides. It was the same vehicle used in 1935, although

Rice Bros. cage No. 86 in 1936. Pfening Archives.





A Seils-Sterling cage truck pulling a cage trailer in Ashland, Wisconsin in 1936. Pfening Archives.

much more elaborately decorated. An article in the July-August 1983 *Bandwagon* noted Rice had an air calliope and three cages at the start of the season with three cage semis later added for Manuel King's wild animal act.

Billboard continued to ignore the Seils-Sterling parade, even in the opening review. Photos indicate that one was given each day. The side show band was atop a titled semi, and some performers rode inside an open top semi. There was a straight bed two-wheeled cage truck pulling a four-wheeled cage trailer. No. 70 cage semi with three dens used wire mesh bars. The shows initials SSC and the truck's number were painted on truck cabs. Other views show the clown band atop a well decorated semi with the title in a small circle and a painting of a lion. A straight open-platform truck carried costumed performers.

Charles Sparks announced at the start of the Downie Bros. season that his show would not parade, although it had done so since its beginning in 1926. He said it was so equipped that it could and would resume the daily march if business conditions so warranted.

The author can attest to the fact that Downie Bros. was prepared to parade. The show played Athens, Georgia on April 17, 1936, the second stand of the season. My high school was in spring break so I was able to spend the entire day on the lot. Arriving shortly after daybreak I found the cookhouse set up at one end of the lot already in operation. In those days Downie moved at night in convoy by departments. Convoys were prohibited a year later with the formation of the Georgia State Highway Patrol. Among several trucks parked at the cookhouse was No. 55, a straight bed, with a tarp completely covering the sides. I could

tell it was a tableau type with paintings, although I could not see them well enough to provide a full description.

Anyway, I assumed it was decorated the same as the previous seasons when it was in the parade. Parked a short distance away was the air calliope truck, beautifully titled and decorated with cherubs and other figures and with no tarp to hide them.

Seven or eight trucks were lined up at the other end of the lot where they had arrived in convoy. The Ben Hur semi was in this group without a tarp. Missing was the Washington Crossing the Delaware painting. After four years on the road I suspect it had worn out and had been removed from the sides of one of the stock semis. In any event, Downie could have paraded had Sparks so desired.

The thirty car Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus was the only railroad show parading in 1936.

1937

Seal Bros. and Haag Bros. were the only motorized circuses parading in 1937.

Billboard (3-13-37) announced that Seal Bros., owned by Bud Anderson, would parade that season. It was to be the first all horse drawn parade with a motorized show with about one hundred people mounted and on tableau wagons. The parade was to feature nine open wild animal dens, three bands, an air calliope, two camels, three elephants, and about eighty horses in the procession. Nearly all parade harness, trappings, and wardrobe were to be

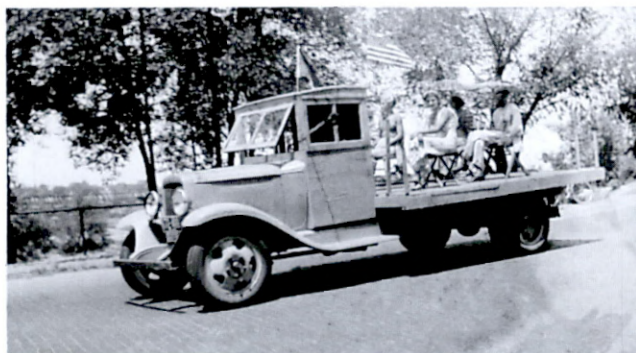


The Seils-Sterling menagerie pole semi-trailer with women performers riding in a 1936 parade. Pfening Archives.

new. (Many of the vehicles were actually pulled by ponies.)

Another *Billboard* (4-10-37) said the Seal Bros. parade included new animals, a large two-humped Asiatic camel, two rare deer, and some beautiful spotted horses to be used for pulling animal cages in the parade.

An inventory of Seal Bros. animals



A Seils-Sterling flat bed truck with performers in a 1936 parade. Pfening Archives.

sold by the show at end of the season included a camel, a dromedary, two tigers, two leopards, three lions, three bears, a hyena, a deer, a wild hog, a

A Seils-Sterling tableau semi-trailer with clowns on top in 1936. Pfening Archives.





Seal Bros. shell band semi-trailer with big show band. Pfening Archives.



Seal Bros. truck with clown band on top parading in 1937. Pfening Archives.



One of the Seal Bros. air calliope trucks. Pfening Archives.



The second Seal air calliope truck used in the 1937. Pfening Archives.



A Seal Bros. four wheeled cage pulled by four ponies. Pfening Archives.



Seal Bros. elephant semi No. 97 in a 1937 parade. Pfening Archives.

mandrill, a baboon, five Rhesus monkeys, seventeen horses, five mules, and eleven ponies.

Circus fan Joe Fleming photographed the show at McCook, Nebraska with parade in progress. Six four-wheel cages paraded, all open, with the show's title on the side. They were pulled by either two horses or four po-

Haag Bros. side show band on the big top pole semi. Pfening Archives.



nies. The big show band rode in a homemade chariot type vehicle pulled by horses. The side show band was on Semi No. 48. The elephant semi paraded as did a straight truck with clowns. Seal had two air calliopes, one in a panel truck and another in a straight truck.

Billboard (4-10-37) reported the new Haag Bros. Circus, owned by Roy and Henry Haag, would parade. Every truck could be used as a parade vehicle. The show had two elephants and twelve Reo Speedwagon trucks.

No motorized show during the decade had more elaborately decorated parade vehicles than Haag Bros. Most photos of the parade were taken within the following season, but the march would have been practically the same. Both semis and straight bed trucks were used. The big show band

rode in an open-top semi as did the side show band.

Performers were on another semi, while clowns were atop a straight truck. The straight bed ticket-office truck, decorated with the owners' portraits, and a straight bed dining department truck, featuring a portrait of a huge elephant with its trainer, appeared in the procession. There was a large three den straight bed truck cage which pulled a small two wheel cage trailer.

Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty, traveling on forty cars, was the only railroad circus to parade in 1937. It was the largest and most elaborate parade ever presented by that show and was topped only by the 1934 Hagenbeck-Wallace procession during the decade.

1938

Parker & Watts and Haag Bros.



The Parker & Watts bandwagon built for the 1938 season. It did not carry the title that year. Although usually pulled by six horses, it is shown here as a semi-trailer. Pfening Archives.

were the only motorized circuses parading in 1938.

During the winter of 1937-1938 Bud Anderson sold Seal Bros. Circus to Charles Parker and Ira Watts. *Billboard* (1-15-38) announced the new Parker & Watts Circus would feature a horse drawn parade.

The march would have calliopes, four bands and three other musical sections. Together with privately-owned stock the show was to have close to seventy-five head of horses, ponies and mules.

The January 29 issue, said the circus had purchased E. E. Coleman's steam calliope. The semi unit was to be scrolled and gold leafed. All cages were to be rebuilt and trimmed with carvings.

Billboard (4-2-38) reported the show would have twelve cages, two camels, three elephants, and fifty head of horses, mules, and ponies. This report was exaggerated as the circus actually only had eight or nine cages. The report that Parker & Watts had decorated both the Seal Bros. cages and the

One of the six former Seal cages in a 1938 Parker & Watts parade in McCook, Nebraska. Pfening Archives.



steam calliope was correct. The steamer was remounted in a semi, vastly improving its appearance.

The show's parade drew favorable comment in both the press and trade publications all season, especially since it was mainly horse drawn, although several trucks were present. By 1937 the horse had virtually disappeared from city streets, as well as farms in many sections of the country, although mules were still widely used in the south on farms. Nostalgia had already developed for them. Another reason for the popularity of a horse-drawn parade on even a truck show had to be the great success of the Cole Bros. railroad show parades since 1935.

Stuart Thayer told the story of the Parker & Watts Circus in the September-October 1969 *Bandwagon* and was quite complete in describing the parade. He listed the 1938 parade as follows:

- 2 Mounted flag bearers.
- No. 1 Bandwagon, with big show band, 6 horse hitch.
- Cage, 4 pony hitch.
- 4 Mounted riders (2 men, 2 women).
- Cage, 2 horse hitch.
- No. 66 tableau semi with No. 2 band.
- Cage, 4 mule hitch.
- Cage, 2 horse hitch.
- Air calliope, mounted in straight truck No. 34.
- Cage, 4 pony hitch.
- Clown cart.
- Cage, 4 pony hitch.

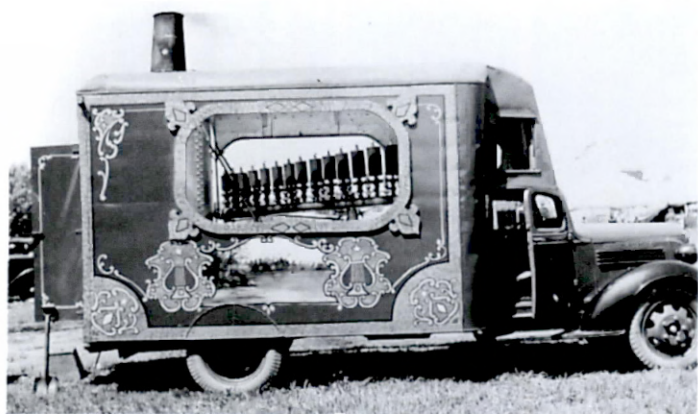
The former E. E. Coleman steam calliope on Parker & Watts in 1938. The carvings were added that year. Pfening Archives.

- 2 mounted women.
- No. 42 straight truck with side show band.
- Cage, 4 horse hitch.
- No. 39 elephant semi.
- Cage, 4 pony hitch
- 2 Mounted men.
- Clown band on Semi.
- 6 Mounted wild west performers.
- Sinclair Dinosaur float.
- 5 Elephants.
- No. 1 semi steam calliope.

All vehicles were well decorated, many with paintings such as the elephant semi which featured a large hippo with its mouth open. The commercial Sinclair Dinosaur float was unusual, using a huge inflated dinosaur. Commercial exhibits were usually confined to advertising banners on the elephants or hung in the big top. At times both truck and rail shows advertised commercial vehicles, with extensive exhibits in the menagerie. In 1932 Hagenbeck-Wallace had an automobile, in 1934 a polar bear was exhibited in the parade advertising Frigidiare.

Parker & Watts cage No. 10 parading in McCook, Nebraska on August 5, 1938. Pfening Archives.





The Parker & Watts steam calliope in a straight truck during the 1939 season. Pfening Archives.



The Sinclair Oil Co. float in a 1939 Parker & Watts parade. Pfening Archives.



The Parker & Watts air calliope truck in 1939. Pfening Archives.



P & W semi-trailer No. 42 with side show band on top. Pfening Archives.



Parker & Watts cage No. 20 pulled by two horses in 1939. Pfening Archives.

The steam calliope semi was wrecked in Idaho in July, but the instrument was salvaged and returned to winter quarters to be rebuilt and placed in another truck. It didn't return to the road until the next season.

Although it was reported (4-30-38 BB) that Haag Bros. would not parade in 1938, it indeed was restored sometime during the season. Haag drew little *Billboard* press so the date is undetermined. Circus fan Joe Heiser saw the show at Springhill, Louisiana on October 27, and photographed the parade. His views show straight truck No. 28 with clowns, big show band riding an open bed semi, No. 20 semi with the side show band and minstrels, and

the office-ticket straight bed truck, highly decorated with the owners portraits. All were Reo trucks with custom built bodies.

Robbins Bros. was the only rail circus parading in 1938. This was a second show for Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell, using excess equipment from the 1937 Cole show, which had been cut to 30 cars in 1938. Cole closed early and six cars were added to the Robbins show to carry the Clyde Beatty cages and a hippo den. The additions strengthened the Robbins parade during the final weeks of the season.

1939

Parker & Watts was the only motorized circus parading in 1939.

Billboard coverage of the show's parade began in the 12-17-38 issue which



The Parker & Watts bandwagon in 1939. It was pulled by six horses. Pfening Archives.

said the show was adding stock for the 1939 parade which was to be enlarged. Only two pieces of motorized equipment would be in it. New parade wardrobe had been ordered.

The 4-1-39 issue noted that a new straight truck had been built for the steam calliope, replacing the one wrecked the prior year.

The bandwagon had not been titled for the 1938 tour, but one was added for the new season. The parade included more than two motorized units, proving the early press releases were often boosted.

Gordon Potter compiled this line up when the show played Benton Harbor,



Parker & Watts semi-trailer No. 33 with hippo painting paraded daily. Pfening Archives.

Michigan on June 7, 1939:

Two girl riders.
No. 1 Big bandwagon, six horses.
No. 30 cage, two horses.
No. 16 cage, 4 ponies.
Four riders.
Second band in semi-trailer.
No. 10 cage, 4 ponies, with performers on top.
Clown, donkey and buggy.
Air calliope in straight truck.
No. 22 cage, 4 ponies.
No. 26 cage, 43 ponies.
Two girl riders.
No. 42 semi with side show band.
No. 20 cage, 2 horses.
Clown riding donkey.
No. 33 semi with hippo painting on sides.

No. 28 cage, 4 ponies.
No. 12 cage, 4 ponies.
Four riders.
Truck with clowns riding.
Sinclair dinosaur balloon float pulled by Austin car.
Six elephants.
Steam calliope in a straight truck.
(Cage No. 24 was left on the lot because of broken tongue.)

Billboard (10-14-39) reported that Parker & Watts closed on October 4 at Guthrie, Oklahoma. Business had dropped after World War II began on September 1. It is assumed the show paraded in Guthrie; if so, it was the final parade given during the decade of the 1930s.

Cole Bros. was the only railroad circus parading in 1939. Cole closed at Greenville, Tennessee on September 30. The parade that day was the last ever for that show.

Epilog

Parker & Watts closed for good after the principal investor refused to put any more money in it. Cole Bros. suffered a disastrous fire in its Rochester, Indiana quarters in February 1940, destroying most of its parade equipment. This precluded any further Cole Bros. parades. So there were no circus pa-

rades in 1940, the first time this had happened in perhaps a century.

Circusdom quickly declared that the circus parade, like the singing clown, was now dead for all times. Indeed, it seemed for a while that was the case.

The Jay Gould Million Dollar Circus, which played fairs, celebrations, reunions and at times for merchant groups, staged circus street parades in the 1940s. This outfit was never considered an authentic traveling motorized circus making daily stands. Gould did have a chariot type bandwagon but details of other parade units are unknown.

In 1942 the V & H circus and parade opened and closed in one day. The ten wagons in the parade were owned by Verne Soules. The following year he

Parker & Watts parade window card used in 1939. Circus World Museum collection.



Parker & Watts cage No. 22 pulled by four ponies in 1939. Pfening Archives.

teamed up with Harry LeRoy for a small small circus titled V & H All American Circus. LeRoy owned canvas, seats and trucks formerly used by Sparton Bros. Soules furnished the wagons and ponies for the parade. V & H gave a parade and two performances in Eaton, Ohio and then broke up due to differences between the owners. The wagons were later acquired by Terrell Jacobs. They appeared with Jacobs' circus and remained in his possession until 1959 when two cages, a tableau and a calliope were sold to Lee Allen Estes of Lexington, Kentucky. They were sold in turn to the Circus World Museum. One cage was sold to Bob Commerford. The bandwagon was sold to King Bros. Circus in the 1950s, later went to the James Drew carnival and then to the Shelbourne Museum.

In 1952 the motorized street parade was reborn on King Bros.-Cristiani and the Tiger Bill Wild West Show. It was a one shot for Leo Snyder's Tiger Bill opera, but King Bros. continued its march for five years.

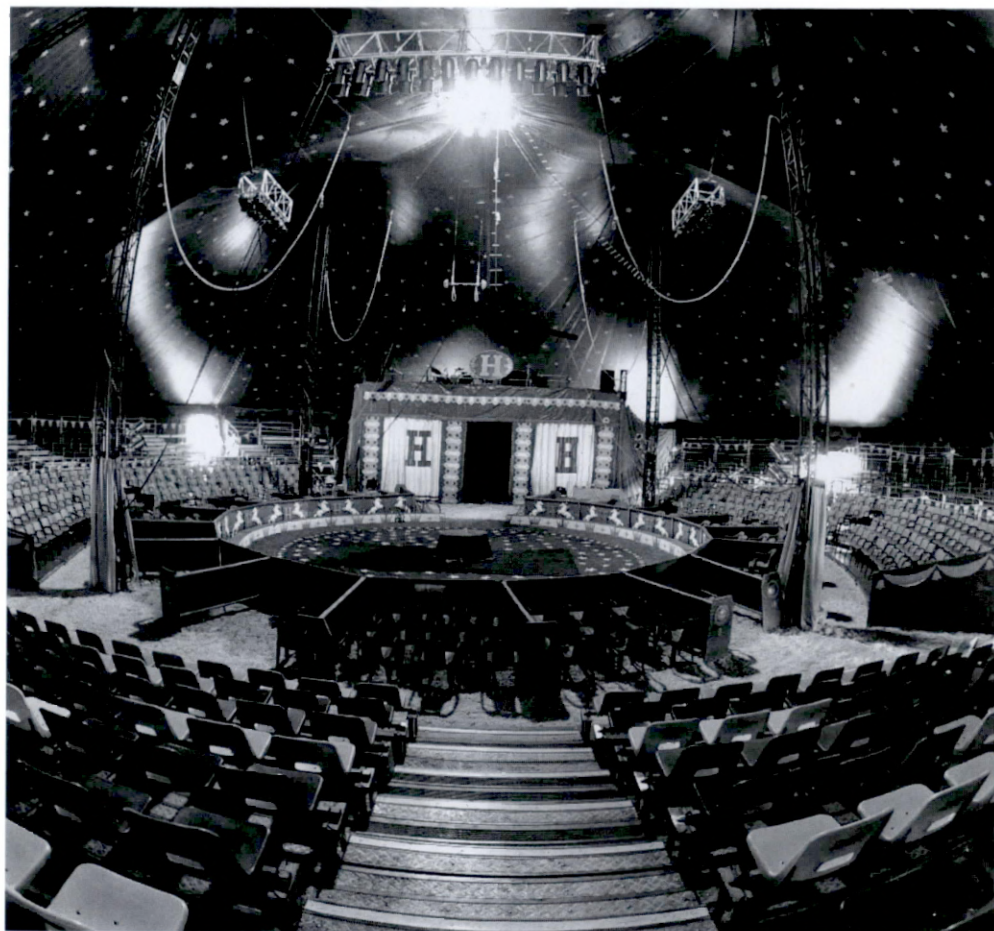
In 1953 Diano Bros. Circus paraded, as did Cristiani Bros. in 1958 and 1959. In 1954 the railroad circus parade was also reborn when the fifteen car Clyde Beatty Circus paraded during the early weeks of the season. The main feature of that march was an old chariot bandwagon that had toured with Bailey Bros. in 1935. An air calliope and several former former Christy-Lee-Bailey cages also appeared. These came from Frank Walters' large collection of circus vehicles.

In 1945 Ringling-Barnum staged a special War Bond drive in New York City, and another in 1948 in Boston for the War Relief drive.

The Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circuses paraded in 1963, using small pony drawn wagons and cages.

The annual Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee, staged by the Circus World Museum, continues to keep alive the memory of the circus street procession.

CONGRATULATIONS
TOMMY AND STRUPPI HANNEFORD
On the Premier of your new
European Circus Tent



More than 100,000 fairgoers experienced
The Big E "Super Circus during its 1995 run.

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL
Wayne McCary, President
EASTERN STATES EXPOSITION

BIG APPLE CIRCUS



Jazzm&/azz

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

BIG APPLE CIRCUS • 35 WEST 35TH ST. NYC 10001 • 212-268-2500

BIG APPLE CIRCUS IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT PERFORMING ARTS ORGANIZATION

This article is from an unpublished 1961 manuscript in the Circus World Museum collection.

RED WAGON RHYTHMS

By Sverre O. Braathen

It is out of the question to determine the exact number of bands that have toured this country with circuses. For one thing there is no printed record that could provide this information. Also it is impossible to determine which circuses used bands or orchestras to cue their performances. For a number of years circuses made use of bands for the street parades but orchestras for the performance. Nor is it possible to determine the exact number of directors who have fronted circus bands. Little has been written about circus bands, their directors or musicians to say nothing about the music written for the circus.

Very few circus directors or musicians have hailed from the northeast section of the United States, but Victor H. Robbins is an exception, coming from Hogdon, Maine. Unlike so many musicians he came into the circus world with musical training. His father was both a newspaper man and a musician. He played trombone with the Barnum & Bailey band during the 1892 season and appeared with Patrick Gilmore who had the first of the large concert bands in this country. Robbins' brother Bill was the director of the music department of the Porterville (California) Union Big School and College for more than twenty years.

Robbins' father started his son on a musical career at the age of ten in 1906, giving him instruction on an upright althorn. Elmer Towne, a friend of the Robbins family and a former director of bands in Boston, prevailed upon him to study the cornet. Towne was not wholly disinterested in this for he was in need of a cornetist for the Madison and Lakewood, Maine Band. He gave young Robbins cornet lessons, so both profited. Later Robbins followed the example of many circus cornetists and studied under the generous and inspiring William Paris Chambers, and still later received a scholarship in music at the Manlius Military School in Manlius, New York from which he graduated. Desiring further education he enrolled in the University of Maine and became a member of the Bangor Band and Orchestra under the direction of

Adelbert W. Sprague who later became the president of the Northeastern Conservatory of Music as well as the director of the music department of the University of Maine.

Robbins served a stretch in the Navy during World War I and following his discharge packed away his cornet and his music and became an engineer in the Merchant Marine. He still holds a valid set of papers for any waters in the world. Music called, however, and he traveled Chautiqua circuits and played with various dance bands and in the orchestra pits of theaters. In 1922 quite by chance he met Al Massey in Boston. Massey was a well known circus band director who at the time was recruiting musicians for the John Robinson Show. He signed Robbins to a contract to play cornet. The following season Massey became the bandmaster of the Sells-Floto Circus and took his entire band with him. During the season he confided to Robbins that he, Massey, was going to leave the show and urged Vic to apply for the directorship.

Sells-Floto was at that time one of the major circuses in the country, and in 1924 Robbins became its bandmaster, beginning a long career as director of circus bands. When he first signed with the Sells-Floto show, his brother Bill, then employed by the First National Bank in Boston, was persuaded to

Vic Robbins and his band on Clyde Beatty in 1945. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

play French horn in his sibling's band and the violin in the aftershow concert.

The Sells-Floto Circus was among those acquired by John Ringling when he bought the American Circus Corporation on the eve of the great depression. By 1932 millions of Americans were unable to buy bread

and to them circus tickets were in much the same category as sails and yachts. At the end of that season Sells-Floto went off the road.

Loathe to leave the tanbark trail, Robbins accepted a position as cornetist with Kay Bros. Circus, one of the early truck circuses, and played in its band during the 1933 and 1934 seasons.

Zack Terrell had been manager of the Sells-Floto Circus in 1932 and when he and Jess Adkins organized the Cole Bros. Circus in the spring of 1935 Robbins was installed as the band director. He continued in that capacity through the 1942 season when he returned to the Merchant Marine to serve his country until the end of World War II. On receiving his discharge in 1945 he became director of the band on the Clyde Beatty Circus, a railroad show. The following year he was the bandmaster of the Sparks Circus. He returned to the Beatty Show in 1947 and remained there until 1957.

Two former Ringling-Barnum executives, Frank McCloskey and Walter Kernan, and other associates, purchased the Beatty Circus in 1956 and decided to transport it on trucks in 1957. Robbins had enjoyed the comforts afforded by the bandsman's car on circus trains during all but two years (those he spent with Kay Bros.) of his tramping. He disliked the sleeping accommodations and living conditions on a truck show and decided the

time had come for him to forsake the road. He retired to Porterville, California where his only musical endeavors have been with the Elks Band. He cherishes many fond memories of his circus days and has no regrets that his musical career was spent in the world of sawdust and spangles.

Back in the years when the American circus played a dominant role on America's amusement stage William N. Merrick of Zanesville, Ohio, made his debut in this branch of the entertainment





world. He played an Eb cornet with the Van Amburgh overland show in 1870, two years before William Cameron Coup first put a large circus on rails. John Phillip Sousa often remarked that he would like to find for his famous band two Eb cornetists of the caliber of his good friend, William N.

Merrick was one of the first band leaders to employ a fully instrumented band under canvas and he introduced many novel features into his repertoire. In his earlier days he wrote virtually all the music he used in his circus programs which was truly original in both conception and execution. For the grand entry on the Adam Forepaugh Circus he wrote the march *Equestrienne*. Merrick was not only a good director for the performance proper but a capable conductor for center ring concerts that in those days preceded the appearance of the arenic stars. His life was devoted to directing bands on the Adam Forepaugh, Sells Bros., Forepaugh-Sells Bros., Great Wallace and the Carl Hagenbeck circuses. His son, A. N. Merrick, played bass in a number of these bands.

In the circus world it was an accepted fact that if one had played with a Gentry Bros. band under the baton of Harry Crigler, one had received the equivalent of a good college course in music. Crigler was born on a farm near Connersville, Indiana, on August 20, 1867 and at the age of five moved with his family to Lebanon in that state. Here at the age of twelve he began the study of music. His first professional experience came with the tiny Dieffenbach Circus. Following that he played bass, baritone, trombone and cornet with a number of circus bands. When he became the director of the band on the

William Merrick and his band on Forepaugh-Sells in 1904.

Terrell Bros. Circus in Paducah, Kentucky in late 1890 he discarded all but the cornet, finding that instrument best lent itself to his role of bandmaster.

Crigler played with the Gentry Bros. Circus in 1897 and thereafter was a member of bands on Hugo Bros., Barnum & Bailey, and the Adam Forepaugh circuses. He also savored the experience afforded by showboats and minstrel bands, playing for a time with the Eugene Robinson Floating Palace and with Hi Henry's Minstrels. In 1905 Gentry Bros. engaged him to direct their band, and he continued in that capacity through the 1917 season. Crigler had no difficulty in attracting experienced musicians to his bands for he was recognized as an outstanding director, able to get from his men their ultimate in talent and effort.

The three most widely known of the wild west shows that took to the road in this country were Buffalo Bill, Pawnee Bill, and Miller Bros. 101 Ranch. William F. Sweeney was the band director Buffalo Bill show for at least twenty-

C. L. Brown and his twenty-eight piece Sells-Floto band in 1918.



five years. Nicola Olivieri was for a number of years the bandmaster on the Pawnee Bill Wild West Show, and Donato C. LaBlanca fronted the band on the 101 Ranch. These three men used either Italian or Mexican musicians almost exclusively.

The central states have furnished circuses most of the outstanding bandmasters. A horde of talented circus bandmen likewise came from this area. A little town in Iowa with the intriguing name of What Cheer sent forth several very competent musicians to troupe with various circuses during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among them were the Dalzel brothers whose chief interest to this narrative is that they gave a fellow What Cheerer, C. L. Brown, his early musical training.

It was young Brown's good fortune that still another circus musician, the famous bandmaster Al Sweet, took an interest in the lad from Iowa. Sweet recognized Brown's latent talents and advised the youth that if he desired to make music his career he would do well to seek competent instruction and suggested he go to Chicago for it. This Brown did.

Yet again the circus played a decisive role in shaping Brown's life. He chanced to be in Salt Lake City in 1914 when Gentry Bros Dog and Pony Show played that beautiful city. Its band was an irresistible magnet for the young musician and he joined out as a cornet player. It must have come as a happy surprise to him when only three weeks later he was appointed director of the number two unit, for the Gentry Bros. Circus bands had established the reputation of being among this country's best.

A year later when Hugo Bros. fifteen car circus took to the road from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Brown directed its fifteen piece band of talented musicians. This show withheld the first two weeks salary until season's end, a custom long prevalent in the circus world.

Season's end came the show's owners proved to be good forgetters and Brown learned a costly but valuable experience.

Brown went on to direct bands on the Sparks Circus and the Sells-Floto show which so bitterly contested territory with the Ringlings. While trouping with Sells-Floto Brown in 1917 organized a group of five clowns and a blackface comedian whose capers caught the fancy of audiences. He



Bubba Voss and his 1959 Kelly-Miller band. Circus World Museum collection.

decided to book this troupe on vaudeville circuits as the Original Brown's Saxophone Six. For twelve years it toured theaters and fairs where everywhere it met with popular acclaim.

Sawdust continued to course through Brown's veins, however, and when he received a telegram asking him to front the band on the Cole Bros. Circus in 1949 he could no longer resist the lure of the tanbark world. The life of a circus troupier was more strenuous than Brown thought his advancing years should be asked to accept, however, and he retired at the end of that season to teach, travel and talk about the years when he was a part of the great American circus. He took one last fling at composing when he wrote *Ramon Galop* for his former cornet player, Ramon Escorcia. Escorcia used it that year on the Cristiani Bros. Circus. Today he writes from his home in Topeka, Kansas. There is nothing he enjoys more than to meet up with former troupers and

William "Boom Boom" Browning and his band on Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus around 1960.



"cut up jack-pots about the good old days."

Every phase of the circus has undergone momentous change within the last three or four decades and in no aspect has this been more apparent than the band. Truck shows cannot afford the same facilities for musicians that the big railway circuses did. The union salary scale for musicians has compelled the present day circus to greatly reduce the number of men in its

bands. This in turn has resulted in a greatly limited instrumentation, with other problems imposed.

Center ring concerts are an impossibility with bands restricted to no more than eight or nine musicians and sometimes less. Bands of this size would be quite without value for street parades. Despite the greatly reduced size of the circus band it is to their credit that most of them are still very creditable in supplementing and cueing the performance. This is due in no small measure to the fact that they are today directed by men who have circus experience, several of them "graduates" of Merle Evans' "school." Of these a few should be mentioned here.

Rudolf "Bubba" Voss, who played cornet the past year on the Beatty-Cole show and where he will return, was born on Christmas eve, 1918 in Orange, Texas where he still makes his home. He came from a musical family and at the age of twelve began taking lessons on the baritone. He was so small was he at that time that some of his neighborhood friends had to assist him in carrying his horn and case to prevent its dragging on the ground when he went for a lesson. At sixteen he began playing in a school band with which he continued until graduation. He served three and a half years with the Army band during World War II, then played for a time with dance units. Voss never chanced to be stranded because of a show going broke, but he once found himself out of work when the club for which he played was raided.

Voss's first experience in the circus world came with an indoor show. In 1952 he joined out with the Kelly-Miller Circus,

playing in the band under Charlie Cuthbert, and remained with it until the spring of 1955 when he became a member of the Ringling-Barnum band. After one year under the direction of Merle Evans, Bubba returned to Kelly Miller as bandmaster.

The largest tented touring circus of the present day is the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. show. In fact, this is an exceptionally large show to be transported on trucks and more nearly approximates a thirty-five car railroad show of bygone days. Much of this is because its owners, managers, bosses, and people in key positions are veterans of the Ringling-Barnum train and canvas circus. Its bandmaster is William "Boom Boom" Browning who was born in Wichita Falls, Texas on March 16, 1925. His family took him to New York when he was three, and seven years later he began to study drums. As a teenager he played with high school bands on Long Island. Like many of his generation he went into the service where he played with Army bands. In the meantime his parents moved to Waco, Texas and Boom Boom enrolled at Baylor University where he obtained a Bachelor of Music degree. He took additional instruction at the Julliard School of Music in New York and studied drums under some of the best teachers in the country.

In the fall of 1951 the Greatest Show on Earth played Waco, Texas. Browning was fascinated by Merle Evans' band, and mustered sufficient courage to ask for a position with it. Merle's reply was the customary one, "Don't call us; we will call you." With the coming of January of the next year, Browning could control his eagerness no longer and wrote Evans asking what were the prospects. In response he received a contract for the 1952 season. He remained with the Ringling show until the close of the 1955 season when he signed to play under "Skinny" Goe, bandmaster of the Ward-Bell Circus, owned by members of the famous Ward-Bell flying return act. Circuses owned and operated by performers seem destined to go broke, and Ward-Bell was no exception.

It ventured into Alaska and soon found its coffers empty. Browning had but \$50.00 which he knew would not last long in the land of prospectors and adventurers. He wired home for money. Upon returning home he took a plane for Chicago to again join out with the Ringling-Barnum band. Later he played drums for the Clyde Beatty Circus and then he got what he terms his "second wild idea." Browning asked Walter Kernan, one of the own-

ers, for the position of band director. To his intense delight this was granted him and he has been with the show since.

If a circus owner or manager has had circus band experience you can be certain that his circus will have a real band. Jake Mills is a circus musician and band director in his own right. What a band the Mills Bros. Circus had during the 1961 season! It was fronted by Joe Stefan with musicians who could cut it in circus style. Additionally the band played real circus music. The elephant number alone was a program of the very best in circus marches. Stefan is an excellent cornet player. He played with the Ringling-Barnum band from 1932 through the 1936 seasons, with Cole Bros. in 1950, Ringling-Barnum in 1956, Cristiani in 1959, Mills Bros. in 1960 and became its director in 1961 and will return again for the 1962 season. He has also played cornet with the outstanding Goldman band in New York and the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra. Stefan is an easterner, being born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

Edward "Eddie" Woeckner is possibly best remembered for the whistle which he would feature in his circus programs. He had a very lengthy career as a director of big top circus bands. Starting with the Al. G. Barnes Circus in 1913 he remained there through the 1922 season. He then moved over to the John Robinson Circus for the seasons of 1923 and 1924. In 1925 he took over the band on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus and remained there through the 1935 season. In 1936 he returned to the Al. G. Barnes Circus for another three year stretch. When he directed the band on the Russell Bros. Circus for the 1940 and 1942 seasons he was the subject of special circus poster publicity. From 1943 through 1947 he was the bandmaster on the Cole Bros. Circus.

It is doubtful if any other circus windjammer can equal the career of A. Lee Hinckley in one respect—the number of different circuses that he has trouped with. He blew his cornet with Howe's Great London Circus in 1916, with Hunt Bros. in 1920, with Atterbury Bros. and Christy Bros. in 1922, and Honest Bill's Circus in 1924. For the 1925 season Hinckley cast his lot with a circus with a most unusual name, that of Orange Bros. and Moon Bros. For the 1928 and 1929 seasons he was with Robinson and Schiedler, and in 1929 he also did a little playing with the Mack Hale Circus band. For the 1934 season he was on Toll Bros., Jethro Almond in 1935, Barney Bros.



in 1936 and 1937, as well as Rice Bros. and Dan Rice in 1937.

During most of his career Hinckley not only played his cornet but was also the band director. He was with Parker and Watts in 1938, Lewis Bros. in 1939 and 1940, Russell Bros. in 1941, Lewis Bros. in 1942 and 1943, Bud E. Anderson in 1945, King Bros. in 1946 and 1947 and the seasons of 1950 through 1956 except 1948 when we find with Stevens Bros. and in 1949 with the John Pawling Circus. He was with Cristiani Bros. Circus in 1957. Hinckley was also a well known circus painter.

Without question that great bass player, composer and band director Walter P. English holds the record for the greatest number of different circuses during one season with nine. Not only that but he finished up the season with nothing to show for it but experience. When shows go broke they do not pay off.

Many other outstanding directors of circus bands could be mentioned, but since little is known about them other than the circuses and seasons they were with them it is deemed advisable to omit them from this story.

Unfortunately it is only a matter of time before there will be no more circus bands to cue circus performances. New band directors have never had circus band experience. They will never become circus band directors and will never play circus music. Circus music was written by men with years of experience in circus bands. You can throw all the circus acts you want to into a program but without a good circus band you have just another show.

It would be impossible to compile the names of all musicians who have played with circus bands. The band directors of many cir-

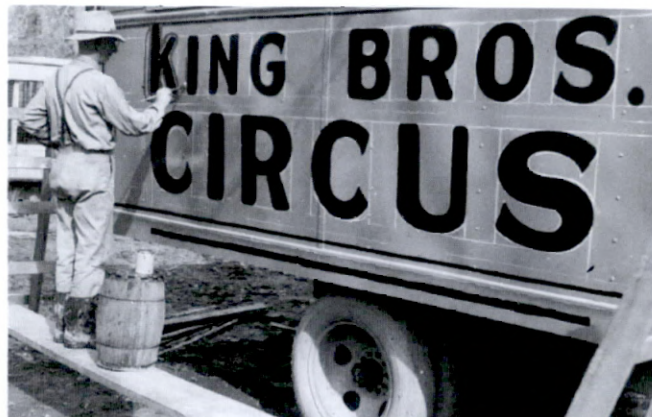
This thirty sheet lithograph of Woeckner and his band was used by John Robinson in 1924.

cuses with good bands would never give out their rosters because they just did not want other band directors, theaters, or minstrel shows to steal their musicians. The writer has compiled an alphabetical list of close to 12,000 circus musicians, the instruments they played and the shows they were with [now at Illinois State University]. But unfortunately because there is a large number of musicians with such common names such as Smith and Anderson with the same instruments, it is impossible to identify some of them.

It is certain that at least eighty-five per cent of the musicians who played with circus bands lasted but a year or less. They simply could not stand the grind required by circus bands. There was a number of musicians with the physical stamina and the lips of steel who stood the grind for twenty, thirty and a very few for forty or more years.

A number of the best circus cornet players remained with circuses from ten to fifteen years. Very few have taken the grind for as many as twenty years and among these may be mentioned Charles B. Van Vactor, twenty-

Bandleader A. Lee Hinckley lettering a truck for the new King Bros. Circus in the spring of 1946.



one years; George Bell, twenty-two years; and Philip Garko, thirty-three years.

There have been several longtime clarinet players. Among those who have remained twenty or more years are Arthur Cox, twenty-two; Antonio J. Ramirez and Frank Tonar, twenty-four; Joseph Pomolio, twenty-five; Wiley B. Scott, twenty-six and Nicholas Altroth, twenty-eight and still troup- ing.

As a rule only the larger bands included a piccolo in their instrumentation. The greatest master of this instrument was Max Ring who played under Merle Evans for twelve of the fifteen years he was on the road. In 1938 Ring had the experience of being stranded when the Col. Tim McCoy Wild West Show folded after only nineteen days.

Some musicians devoted all their troup- ing days to one circus and a few to only such major shows as Ringling Bros., Barnum & Bailey and Ringling-Barnum. Fred E. Bates was a horn player with Barnum & Bailey for fifteen consecutive years and it was the only show he was with. Without question Paul S. Davis was the most outstanding horn player of all time. In his twenty years as a circus musician he preferred the Ringling-Barnum band where he did very nearly all of his playing. He was also a member of the Sousa and Arthur Pryor concert bands. He is possibly the only horn player that could play after beats in a gallop. Charles Wetterman, a horn player, trouped for twenty years.

A competent drummer is a must with every circus band director. Three of the best known bass drummers were Henry F. "Hank" Young, Albert Yoder and Roland Sherbondy. Young drummed with circuses for at least twenty-four years. He was with the Sells Bros. Circus starting in 1883. In 1893 we find him with the Barnum & Bailey Circus and with this show he made the five year tour of Great Britain and Europe from 1897 through 1902. In 1910 and 1911 he was with the Ringling Bros. Circus and finished the 1911 season with Sun Bros. He later drummed for the Sells-Floto, Mighty Haag, Robinson's Famous and in 1919 and 1920 he was with the Ringling-Barnum Circus. No other bass drummer has equalled Albert Yoder for length of service with circuses. For at least thirty-one years he drummed on the John Robinson, Walter L. Main, Hagenbeck-Wallace, Dugan Bros., Al. G. Barnes, Cole Bros, Clyde Beatty, King Bros., Wallace Bros. Crstiani and Ringling-Barnum.

Roland Sherbondy, who at the

present day is devoting all his time and attention with a band instrument company at Kenosha, Wisconsin, was the drummer for Merle Evans for eight years and like Max Ring was with the ill-fated Tim McCoy Wild West Show.

When it comes to the snare drum W. Ray "Red" Floyd never has had an equal. His troup- ing days have all been with the Ringling-Barnum Circus. You can count the present day snare drum- mers on the fingers on one hand who can play one-to-the-bar gallops. Many drummers credit Floyd with adding greatly to their knowledge of and ability with the snare drum.

Many circus band directors have stated that the trombone is the backbone of any circus band. A few masters of this instrument have written excellent circus music. In fact, with few exceptions it was the musicians who played trom- bone, baritone or bass who wrote very nearly all of the good circus music.

Among these may be mentioned Fred Huffer and Charlie E. Duple. Like so many of the circus music fraternity, Huffer came from the central states. He was born in Stewardstown, Illinois, in 1879 and moved with his family to Helena, Montana. There his father played violin in the theater orchestra, and Fred began the study of music. When he was studying under A. F. Weldon in Chicago he chanced to see an ad of the Ringling Bros. Circus for a baritone player for their side show band for the Chicago engagement only. He filled this engagement, and when the Ringling Show left

Ray "Red" Floyd playing in the Ringling-Barnum band in 1965. Buster Bailey photo.



the Windy City for its road tour Huffer discovered that sawdust had been injected into his veins. He left for Omaha to join the Rhoda Royal show. After "tromboning" with this circus for six weeks he became a member of that large group of musicians who had at least once in their careers been stranded when their show went broke. He received no pay check but had drunk deep of the cup of circus fellowship, and the absence of a few pay checks did not discourage him from joining bands on other shows. He proved himself a versatile musician who could hold his own on the trombone, baritone, or cornet with any circus band. In his leisure time he found vent for his circus music enthusiasm by composing several pieces which have remained in demand by bandmasters. Among these are *Knights of the Road* march, *Loves Entreaty Waltz*, *Palm Garden Rag*, *Soldiers of the Sea* march and *Thunderbolt* gallop.

Charles E. Duple came from Jeffersonville, Indiana. He left home to play with the Gentry Bros. Circus band after he had mastered an old brass trombone. He trouped with many different circuses, including Sun Bros. in 1909, 1912 and 1913; Dode Fisk in 1910; John Robinson in 1911 and 1917; Mighty Haag in 1912; Barnum & Bailey in 1913; Robinson Famous in 1914; Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1915; Sparks in 1916; Sells Floto in 1918; Ringling-Barnum in 1919, 1924 and 1930; Downie Bros. in 1932, 1933, 1935 and 1939; and Russell Bros. in 1940. He also played with De Rue Minstrels and Uncle Tom's Cabin.

He wrote a number of excellent circus marches which included *Barnum & Bailey's Royal Pageant*, *Battle of the Wind*, *The Circus King*, *Wizard of the West* and others. You can hear his outstanding *Bravura* march on the following records *Screamers*, and *Circus Time*. *Old Glory Triumphant* march is on *Circus In Town*.

Andrew "Andy" Grainger was born on April 3, 1886 at Sturgis, Kentucky. His mother had an excellent voice and played the organ in a little church. When his father died while Andy was a very young lad he had to go to work in the coal mines to help support his mother. He learned to play trombone and gained experience with a coal mine band. When the opportunity came to join the Gollmar Bros. Circus band in 1913 he was happy to escape the mine fields. For thirty-six years Grainger played the slip horn in the "Million Dollar" street parades and under the massive spreads of canvas.



Charles E. Doble in the Sells-Floto band in 1918.

For eight consecutive years he was with the Ringling-Barnum band.

Louis D. "Lou" Bader came from a musical family. When an old German barber and music instructor boarded with the Bader family in West Lebanon, Indiana in 1906, he paid by teaching music to several members of the family, including Lou's four brothers and two sisters. Incidentally, this itinerant barber and music teacher was the father of Tom Gott, the original trumpet player in Paul Whiteman's Orchestra. After playing trombone with several local bands and orchestras Lou Bader decided to become a professional. His first engagement came with a carnival band. At the suggestion of Ellis "Skinny" Goe, Bader wrote to Al Massey, the director of the Sells-Floto band, and asked for a job. After a time spent with this show Bader joined the Ringling-Barnum band and played under Merle Evans for twenty-nine years. He was one of the best trombone players who ever played with a circus band.

Other slip horn players with circus bands who stood out were Stanley Czerwinski with Ringling-Barnum for fifteen years; Herbert Cliffgard of Grafton, North Dakota, twenty-two years; and Rudolph Anderson, twenty-eight years.

Possibly the most outstanding bass player in this country at the present time is Harvey Phillips. He joined Merle Evans' band at the age of fifteen. Clinton R. Evans is one of the most outstanding bass players that the circus world has known. He was with

the John Robinson Circus in 1923, Golden Bros. in 1924, and Christy Bros. in 1925. He was with Ringling-Barnum 1926 through 1928, 1936 through 1942, 1946 through 1952, and 1954 through 1956. He was with Clyde Beatty in 1960 and has played with Cristiani Bros. He has played with an endless number of bands and orchestras including the Sousa band.

Carl Bersgren played the bass horn for twenty-four years with a number of different shows. Sylvester Larios, who is presently living in Mexico, had the longest tenure of the baritone players with twenty years.

Strictly speaking, the calliope is not a band instrument. It has often been used to give more power to circus bands. It is often used to give the small bands a lift from the grind of steady playing. Louis Grabbs has played the calliope for thirty-one years and Fred Mullin, both the calliope and organ, with circus bands for not less than twenty-six years.

It is most interesting to note that with few exceptions all great circus music—the marches, gallops, waltzes and rags—was written by musicians who had played with the Barnum & Bailey Circus. Interesting, too is the fact that for the most part this music was composed

by men who played bass, baritone or trombone. One exception must be noted, the music of Charles W. Storm of Lexington, Kentucky. Another exception is William Paris Chambers, one of the country's leading cornetists of his day, many of whose compositions have long been standard repertoire for circus bands. It has sometimes been stated that Chambers played with circus bands, but a careful search has failed to reveal his name on any roster. His *Chicago Tribune* and *Hostraiser* marches have thrilled hundreds of thousands who have crowded city streets to watch the magnificent parades and listen to the bands. That Chambers loved circuses is also evidenced by his generosity in giving cornet lessons to many a trouper, often without assessing a fee. One of Chamber's students was Charles W. Storm who became an excellent cornetist, playing with circus bands and appearing as soloist with some of the leading concert bands. Storm, too, wrote a number of stirring circus marches, including *Rhoda Royal*, *Hagenbeck-Wallace Grand Entry*, and *Under the Big Top*, as well as a lilting waltz for Lillian Lietzel which he entitled *Queen of the Air*.

PRESENTING THE

CLYDE BEATTY-COLE BROS. CIRCUS

1995 ROUTE BOOK

The first in 34 years! Featuring the official route, program, statistics and personnel for the season of 1995 in a limited and numbered edition of 500 copies. Photos, stories, cartoons and more.

\$10.00 each, plus \$2.00 postage.

Reserve your copy now, issued by checks payable to:

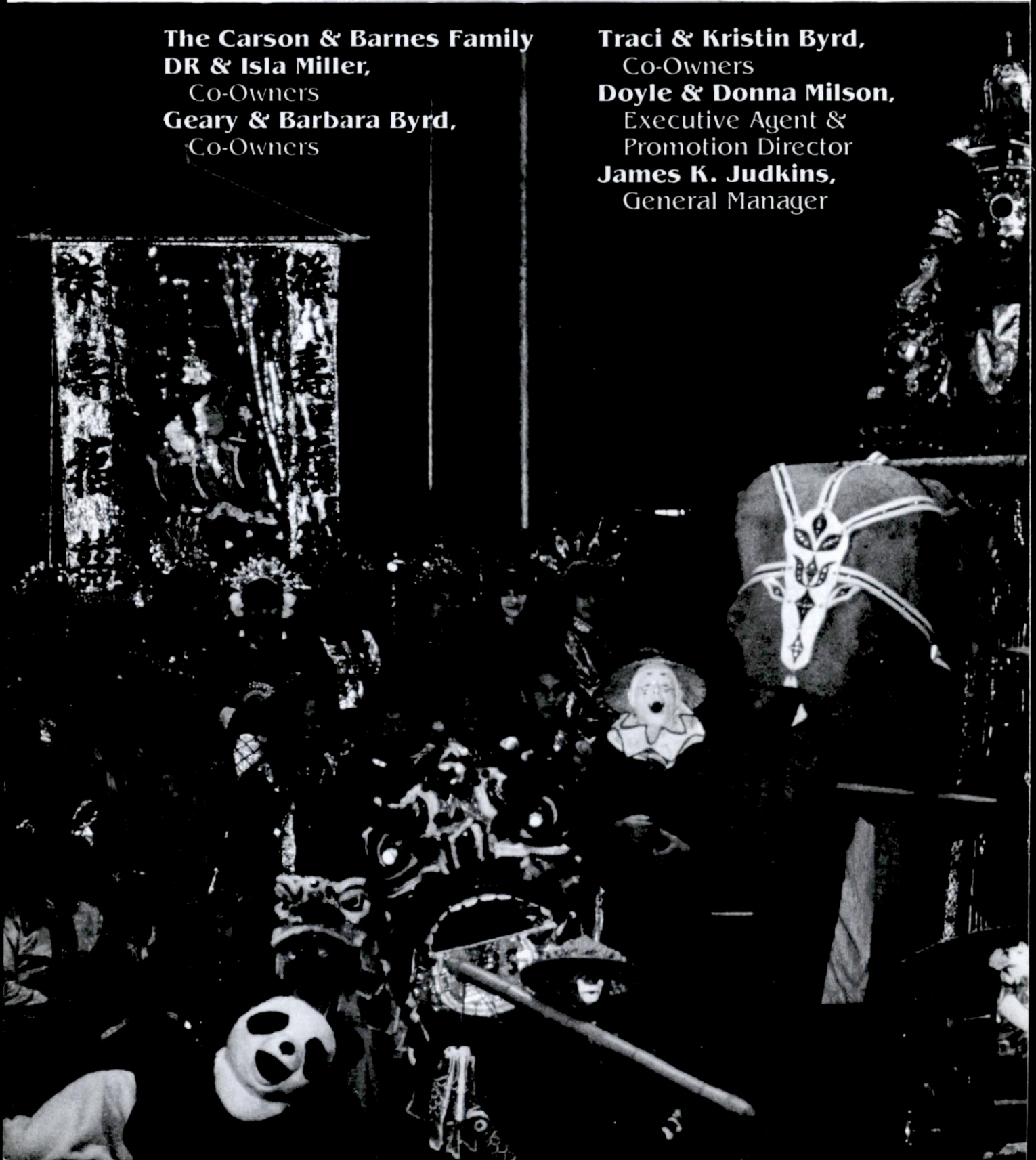
TIMOTHY NOEL TEGGE
P. O. BOX 661, BARABOO, WI 53913

TO ALL OUR CIO

Blue Skies, Grassy Lots and Espo

The Carson & Barnes Family
DR & Isla Miller,
Co-Owners
Geary & Barbara Byrd,
Co-Owners

Traci & Kristin Byrd,
Co-Owners
Doyle & Donna Milson,
Executive Agent &
Promotion Director
James K. Judkins,
General Manager



MARCUS FRIENDS

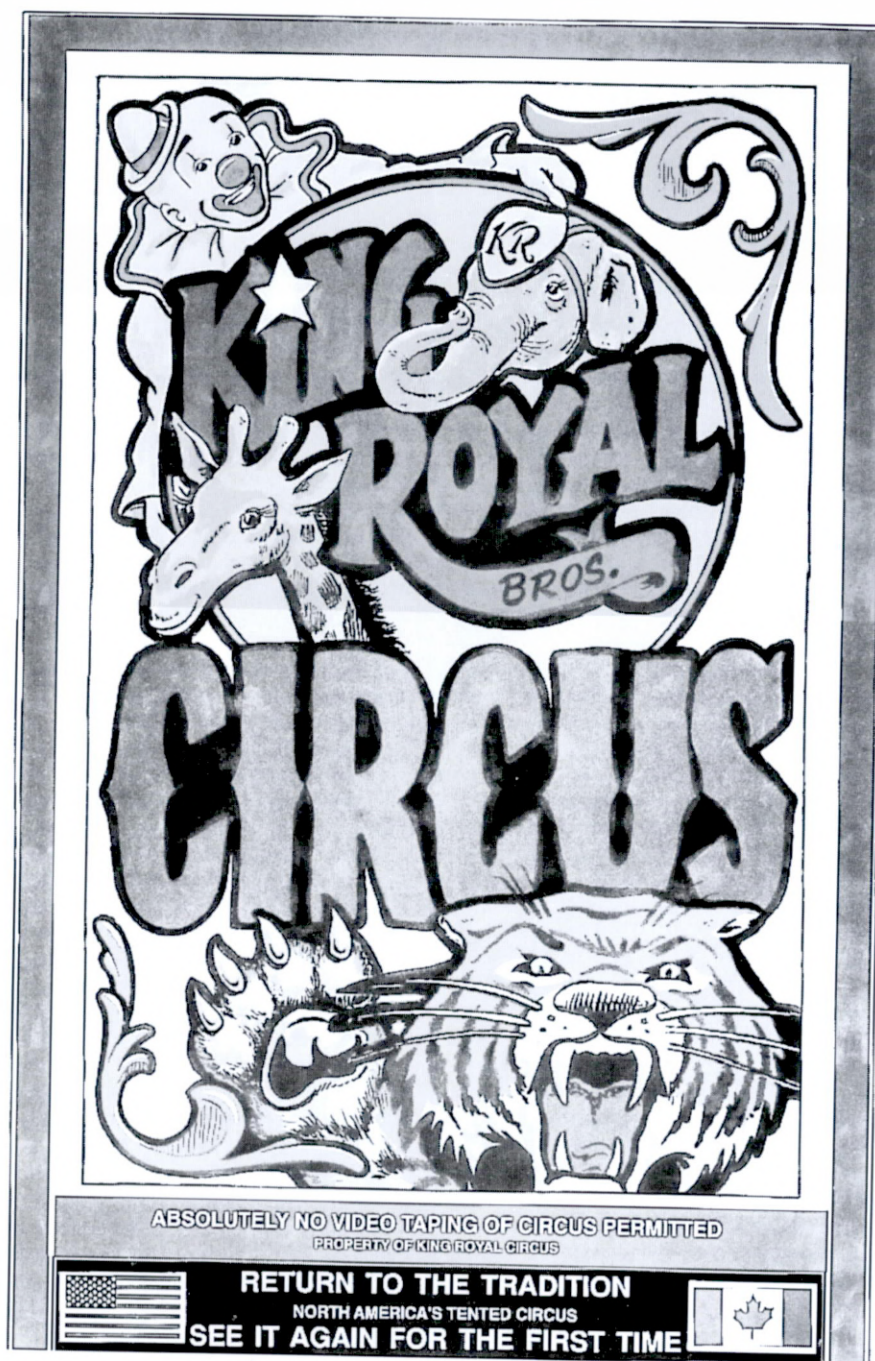
Specialty Straw Houses For 1996





Holiday Greetings
and Best Wishes

Joe and Marion McKerron



Season's Greetings

We will see you in 1996

In Memory Of

Mr. Tillman F. Taylor, Sr.

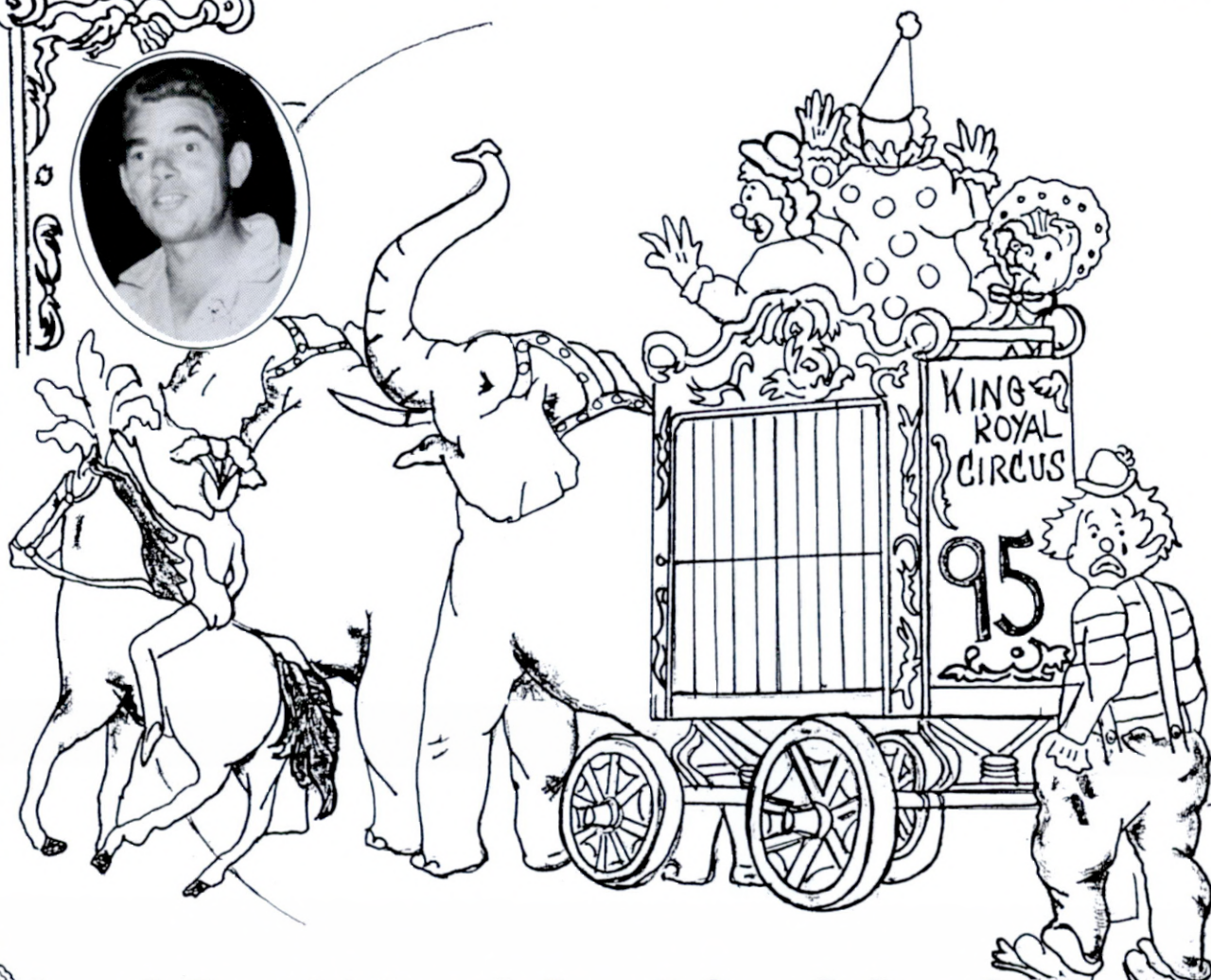
Press Agent

5, Sept. 1919

21, June 1995

As we close the 1995 season and move onto the lots of 1996, we pause to pay our last respect and tribute to a life long family friend and beloved colleague. Til, "Mr. Anonymity," your presence was and is felt and will long be joyously remembered and sadly missed.

King Royal Bros Circus
Jacobs-Davenport Bros & Families



\$700.00 REWARD

Wanted anything pertaining to the Fred Buchanan Circuses of Granger, Iowa.

TITLES USED

Yankee Robinson 1906-1920

World Bros. 1923

Robbins Bros. 1924-1931

I Will Pay \$700 to locate and use a photograph of circus train parked on siding at the Granger quaters. All letters answered.

Merry Christmas And Happy New Year

Joseph S. Rettinger
Director Division 7
Circus Historical Society
P. O. Box 85036
Phoenix, Az 85036



Best wishes for Peace, Health
and Happiness this Holiday
Season and the coming year.

2928 East Octillo Rd.
Queen Creek, AZ 85242

New video now available for Christmas delivery!

CIRCUS ECHOES

THE SHOW OF A CENTURY

At one time there were more than 100 traveling circuses in Wisconsin. This is the story of one family owned circus. It spans 3 generations of performers beginning in vaudeville at the turn of the century with the dream of owning their own circus to the development of the Seils-Sterling Circus, one of the largest truck shows of the 1920's and 30's. Although it was a casualty of the Depression, the grandchildren continued trouping with other circuses throughout the 1940's, 50's, 60's and 70's. Come and explore the intrigue and romance of this nomadic lifestyle and discover its powerful impact on the American imagination. Enter the world of your senses, of spangles and sawdust, and journey back into the Golden Age of the Circus!

Only \$20.00 each

*Funded in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council
and the National Endowment for the Humanities*

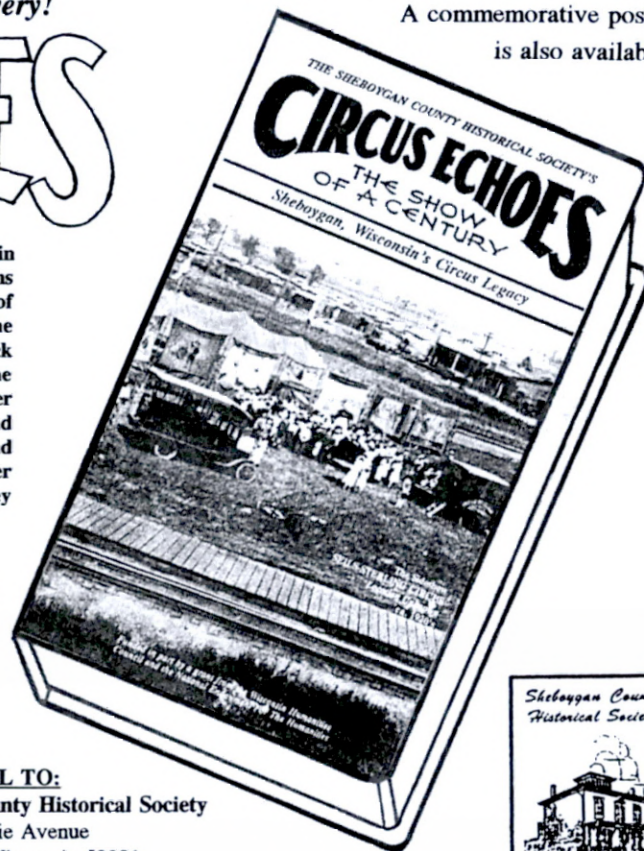
Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Video: \$20.00 _____ Unsigned Poster: \$8.00 _____
Numbered & Hand Signed Poster: \$12.00 _____
Payment: Check _____ Money Order _____ Visa/MC _____
Visa/MC #: _____ Exp. Date _____
Signature: _____
Add \$4.95 for shipping & handling, \$5.95 for Canada

MAIL TO:

The Sheboygan County Historical Society
3110 Erie Avenue
Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53081
To order by phone: (414) 458-1103

60 MIN. VIDEO

A commemorative poster
is also available.



This paper was presented at the Circus Historical Society convention in San Antonio, Texas on October 21, 1995.

THE RARE FEMALE PYGOPAGUS

By Orin Copple King

Copyright 1995 Orin Copple King

The first sighting in Kansas of a rare male pygopagus occurred in the evening of January 23, 1867, in Manhattan. The Manhattan *Independent* firmly stated that Chang and Eng was "no Wax Work."

On July 13, 1870, an equally rare female pygopagus was sighted in Ft. Scott and was seen again on July 14, quickly followed by appearances in Iola on July 20; Topeka, July 25, 26; Lawrence, July 27, 28; Leavenworth, July 29, 30 and August 1; and Atchison, August 2 and 3.

The July 13 Ft. Scott *Daily Monitor* ran the following: "THE PYGOPAGUS --The double-headed girl, who will be exhibited in this city to-day and tomorrow, is, perhaps, the greatest curiosity of the age. The Siamese Twins, who have excited the wonder and curiosity of the world for years, exhibit in . . . [unable to read on microfilm] degree the remarkable and unaccountable freaks sometimes indulged in by usually methodical and precise Dame Nature.

"The formation is that of two negroes, united from the lumbar vertebrae down to the end of the sacrum. There are two heads, two bodies, four arms and four legs; two hearts, one on the left side of the one, and one on the right side of the other. Their names are Millie and Christina, and they were born of slave parents in 1852 (sic), in Columbia county, North Carolina. Their weight at birth was seventeen pounds, and their present weight is about one hundred and thirty-nine pounds. They are well formed, and in excellent health, having rather pleasing features, and resembling each other very much, and having the complexion of a fair mulatto. They are cheerful and intelligent, fond of reading, sing sweetly, and converse modestly and fluently. Pain or sensation below the union is felt by both, one can locate its seat, the other cannot. They run and walk readily and with celerity, and can dance a schottische gracefully. The inner limbs are a little shorter than the outer ones, and Christina, the left hand twin, is somewhat larger and stouter than Millie. The former lifts the latter and walks or runs with her with great ease, but Millie cannot perform the same feat with her sister. They appear contented and happy.

"Their formation is perfect so far as

regards all requirements of natural life, yet the strange freak of nature in this wonderful departure from the ordinary course of animal formation is one of those puzzles which philosophers and physicians cannot explain."

The twins were advertised as "The Wonderful TWO-HEADED GIRL," and could be seen for fifty cents, children twenty-five cents.

The city of Topeka issued license No. 191 to H. P. Ingalls in the amount of ten dollars for two days of exhibition.

Sincere comments on the twins were rare but the Iola *Neosho Valley Register* related that, "The two-headed girl made her appearance at Odd Fellow's Hall last Wednesday, and a large number of our citizens improved the opportunity of witnessing the most marvelous freak of nature that was ever known. All declare that it is no humbug, but a living reality."

The Leavenworth *Daily Commercial*

The Carolina Twins around age 14. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives.



reported on "The Two Headed Girl" following the opening exhibition: "We went yesterday to see 'The Two Headed Girl' at the Opera House than whom there has seldom appeared a more extraordinary freak of nature. We have called her the 'two headed girl' but we prefer rather to speak of our subject as the

twins, they being more disjoined than joined.. They strike one at first as being Indians, they having an admixture of African and Indian blood. The girls are really well formed, considering the difficulties under which they labor, and there can be no doubt but that they are far more curious than the Siamese Twins, the juncture of their bodies being complete. The girls move actively, dance, sing and appear in good health and spirits. They are now 17 years old, and are a curious physiological spectacle. Their sense of feeling from the hips downwards is mutual, they having a common feeling, but below that point their nervous system is independent.

"There are two exhibitions daily, one in the afternoon for ladies and children and one in the evening."

The Saturday audiences, according to the *Commercial*, "drew a larger house than ever yesterday, there being a very large attendance of ladies and children in the afternoon to view this curiosity. There can be no doubt but that these girls are the most surprising specimen of humanity ever witnessed, altogether surpassing the Siamese twins, and other freaks of nature before exhibited. The desire manifested to see them is general. The opportunity should not be lost of seeing this great wonder. The children are well mannered and there is nothing in the exhibition to displease even the most sensitive."

The Atchison *Daily Champion* described the twins as "a union of two heads and upper part of each trunk, four hands and four feet, the lower parts of the spinal columns of each being united, forming but one bone, common to both, and therewith but one set of organs." The details of "but one set of organs" were too astonishing to be described in the public press of 1870.

Following Atchison, Millie-Christine did not appear in Kansas again until 1882.

Millie-Christine were not the only Siamese twins on exhibition. Prior to their death in 1874, Chang and Eng were the best known. On exhibition at the Aquarium in New York City in

HISTORY AND MEDICAL DESCRIPTION

OF THE

TWO-HEADED GIRL.



SOLD BY HER AGENTS FOR HER SPECIAL BENEFIT, AT TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

Cover of a thirty-two page booklet, covering the history and medical description of the girls, published in 1869.

1878 were Rosa and Mary Drouin, the St. Benoit twins. Rosa and Mary were eleven months old and were touted by the illustrious circus press agent, Tody Hamilton, who could not resist being clever and asked the question "What I want to know is this. If a man marries them does he commit bigamy?"

Millie-Christine returned to Kansas in 1882 as the top attraction of Batcheller & Doris' Great Inter-Ocean Show. The first Kansas date was Marysville, Monday, August 28. The *Marshall County News* carried two full page advertisements, one for Batcheller & Doris and the other for Sells Bros. due Friday, September 1.

To quote the ad: "MILLIE-CHRISTINE The Famous two Headed Lady.

"She is the most Marvelous Human Being since Creation, having two perfect heads and shoulders and four Hands but one body and four lower limbs and feet. Remember that the opportunity of seeing this the most marvelous wonder on earth is afforded you but once in a lifetime, and that you have never had the pleasure and privilege of seeing her before, you may take ancient and modern history, and search them through, but will not find

any account of a human being ever living among the many millions that have lived since the creation that was as strange and wonderful as Millie-Christine the Two-Headed Lady.

"She has appeared before eight sovereigns, in as many Kingdoms in the Old World in the last ten years and she appears in our city, endorsed by the leading lights of the Medical Faculty and the Scientific World in all the large cities, as the most wonderful specimen that walks the earth to-day. Professors Pancoast, Gross, Agnew, Meiggs, Dugeson and Bliss, the highest medical authority in America, say of the Two Headed Lady. 'Never on earth since the birth of our Savior there was born to live and breath the breath of life as curious anomaly of Nature's great family as Millie-Christine. She has Two Perfect Heads and Shoulders which blend into one body, and form to all intents and purposes one person. Millie-Christine possesses a splendid education and is able to converse with two persons at the same time, on

different subjects, in different languages, as both heads speak German, French, Italian and English. She is a Splendid Vocalist, one voice a contralto and one a soprano."

A handout in the *News* stated that, Millie-Christine is "a part of the big show, and not a side show attraction."

Following show day the *News* called the Batcheller & Doris show "the biggest 'snide' on earth."

The Leavenworth *Democratic Standard* ran a handout August 25 stating that, "In the Museum, which it should be remembered, is connected with and forms a part of the big show, will be presented the greatest wonder of the world, Millie-Christine, the 'Two-Headed Nightingale,' who was secured for the season at the enormous salary of \$25,000 for the season. Millie-Christine is two women in one, possessing two heads, four arms and four legs, but one body. Many doubtless will imagine that the unique is associated with the repulsive, or will imagine at least that an exceptional freak of nature would mar to some extent the superficial charms which tend to make human objects attractive but to such the effect will be astounding as a more attractive and thoroughly interesting being, all things considered, it is impossible to imagine. Millie-Christine is a charming vocalist,

a graceful dancer and vivacious conversationalist, and her performance alone is more than worth the price of admission to the entire show. In the Museum will also be found a band of Sioux Indians led by their Chief War Cloud."

On circus day in Leavenworth on September 1, press agent Charles A. Davis had a long conversation with a *Standard* reporter: "Notwithstanding our other features, Millie-Christine is undoubtedly the stellar attraction. This is not to be wondered at when it is taken into consideration that she alone--of all people on earth to-day--possesses a dual existence. The people everywhere manifest the greatest curiosity to see her, in some instances traveling by wagon a distance of fifty miles to attend the show. Surprise is sometimes expressed as to why we speak of Millie-Christine in the singular number, when it is admitted that she is admittedly two.

"The fact that both heads invariably speak of themselves in the singular never using the plurals, 'we' and 'us' causes their acquaintances to address them in the same manner. Both heads agree entirely in everything, which, I take it, is more from habit than anything else, although some scientists use this as an argument to show that the dual lady is but one, intellectually, as well as physically. A peculiar mental characteristic of Millie-Christine is that a person may open a conversation with one head, and the other for a

Millie-Christine around twenty-six years of age.



The twins were pictured in an 1883 John B. Doris newspaper advertisement.

The girls, being stolen property, could not be successfully advertised and the Texan placed them in Col. Woods museum in

In Birmingham Thompson's luck finally ran out. Joseph Smith, his wife,

Millie-Christine as adults in 1899.



WINDSOR, FRIDAY, JUNE 29.

"The Great Inter-Goran has firmly established itself as a concept" as show, and carries its advertisements out to the letter."—*His Ford, (Can.) Current*

COMING. COMING.
ON HIS FIFTH ANNUAL TOUR!

A GRAND CONSOLIDATION

JOHN B. DORIS'

GREAT INTER-OCEAN

LARGEST AND BEST SHOW ON EARTH.

MONSTER MILLIONAIRE MENAGERIE

Megatherian Museum and Double-Ring Circus!
Unrivalled in Extent, Unparalleled in Attractiveness and Unsurpassed in General Excellence. Re-
sulting from its transportation.

3---PALACE RAILWAY TRAINS---3

Especially constructed for the purpose, and loaded and bearing its burden, representing an actual outlay of \$1,000,000, embracing a greater variety, and more extensive, utility and novelties than have ever before been offered, under any circumstances.



MILLIE CHRISTINE, the Two-Headed Lady!

The most wonderful made of all God's creatures. Two heads, two hearts, four arms and lower limbs, uniting in a single body, all being perfectly and symmetrically formed. Engaged last season, after ten years' absence in Europe, by Messrs. Bachelier & Doris, and re-engaged by Mr. Doris for this season for the enormous salary of \$15,000. She is not a sideshow curiosity, but is seen in the Great Inter-Ocean Show free of charge.

MORE AND RARER WILD BEASTS

THAN WERE EVER BEFORE EXHIBITED UNDER CANVAS.

A HUGE HERD OF PERFORMING ELEPHANTS

Comprising all the different species. An Amphibious Anomaly,
 FROM THE GREAT EASTERN BOULEVARD

OR, BOVINE BEAST OF THE SEA.
FEROCIOUS MAN EATING LION SLAYERS

FEROCIOUS MAN-EATING LION-SLAYERS

his attorney, detective Vestal and the twins' mother attended an evening exhibition. On seeing Millie-Christine Menemia completely disrupted the performance, loudly demanding the return of her children. Thompson escaped by jumping out a second floor window. With the aid of the American Consul, Millie-Christine was returned to their mother by an English court.

Thompson followed the twins back to North Carolina. The people of Charlotte threatened the kidnapper with tar and feathers and the culprit prudently withdrew from the lives of Millie-Christine.

Joseph Smith in 1857 now had his turn at exhibiting the Two-Headed Girl, but following a four state tour the girls were once again abducted and exhibited for nearly two years by an unidentified promoter. Only one source mentions this kidnapping and it should be viewed with suspicion.

Eventually Millie-Christine was re-united with the Smith family in a familial way. The girls were taken to live in the Smith house and were educated and taught to sing and dance gracefully by Mrs. Smith whom they called their "white moma."

Joseph Smith died in 1860. The family was financially destroyed by the Civil War. Millie-Christine returned to exhibiting for the financial benefit of Mrs. Smith. So successful were the twins that, in addition to providing for the needs of Mrs. Smith, they earned enough to buy the Smith plantation which they gave to their parents, Jacob and Menemia.

Thousands of pamphlets were sold to audiences, but the best report on the early days of the twins appeared in the September 1988 issue of the *South African Theatre Journal* written by Bernth Lindfors: "At the age of 15 the girls were examined by Prof. Charles A. Lee, who, after attending an examination in Washington, D. C., wrote to a friend on May 9, 1866.

"I have just come from visiting a monstrosity which will interest you much. It is that of two negroes united from the lumbar vertebrae down to the end of the sacrum. There are two heads, two bodies, four arms, four legs, one anus, one vagina, one desire to urinate and one to defecate (simultaneous). Two hearts, one on the left side of the one, and one on the right side of the other. Pain or sensation below the



This full color card of the girls was issued by John B. Doris in 1883. It was printed by the Strobridge Lithograph Co.

union is felt by both; one can locate its seat, the other cannot, but feels it, for example, how many times I pinched her sister. They are very active and intelligent, sing well, read, dance, and run; never quarrel or disagree; have splendid Caucasian (sic) heads. They have menstruated seven months. They have never been sick but once; then had fever and ague, taken at the same time. Mother weighs 240 lbs., father 160; mother full-blooded African, has had 17 (sic) children; father, a mulatto.

"One of the sisters may have headache, the other not; one may sleep while the other is awake, etc. They experience hunger and thirst, however, at the same time; appetite good. Height of one four feet five and a half inches; of the other, four feet six inches. They are united back to back; they have both become accustomed to face the same way, so that the outer legs (one right, the other left) are larger, better developed and stronger than the inner. The feet, of course,

are placed quite obliquely when they walk. The larger one can walk and carry the other. They walk well on the outer legs."

According to Prof. Lee the pulse rate of Millie was 80 and that of Christine 68.

Prof. Wm. H. Pancoast, M. D., who examined the twins in 1871 reported that the bond that bound them together was 26 inches in circumference. In 1878 Pancoast again examined them and found no physical reason why the girls should not marry, but he held a strong moral objection to their marriage. Nowhere is there any hint or mention of the girls having a romantic relationship with anyone.

In 1871 Millie-Christine began an eight year tour of Europe visiting England, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Holland and Russia. A command performance was given at Buckingham Palace for Queen Victoria. Another European tour of lesser duration was undertaken in 1885.

The career of Millie-Christine was a manager's fondest dream come true. Exhibited independently the girls drew over 30,000 paid admissions in Washington in one week and 150,000 during an eight-weeks' run in Philadelphia.

Railroads faced a dilemma in transporting the twins. Should they collect two fares? If only one ticket was purchased which twin should be put off the train? The puzzle has all the signs of a press agent's creation. In any event several railroads between 1892 and 1895 instructed their passenger agents to charge for only one person.

Millie-Christine had a long and successful career before retiring in the early 1900's to Columbia county, North Carolina, where they bought a ten room house. The house was destroyed by fire in 1909 and was replaced by a six room cottage.

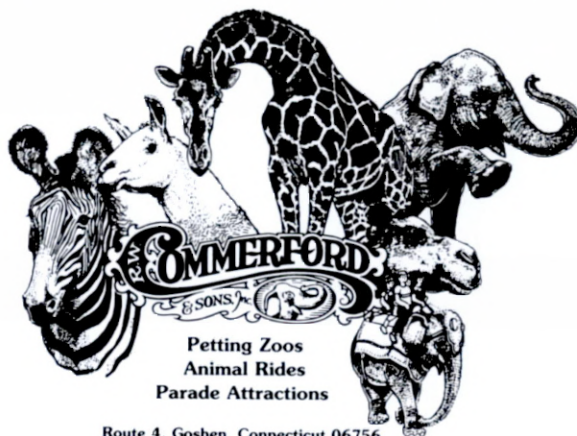
For a lengthy time Millie suffered from tuberculosis, eventually dying October 9, 1912.

Seventeen hours later Christine died.

The twins were buried near their home. Inscribed on their tombstone was their chosen epitaph.

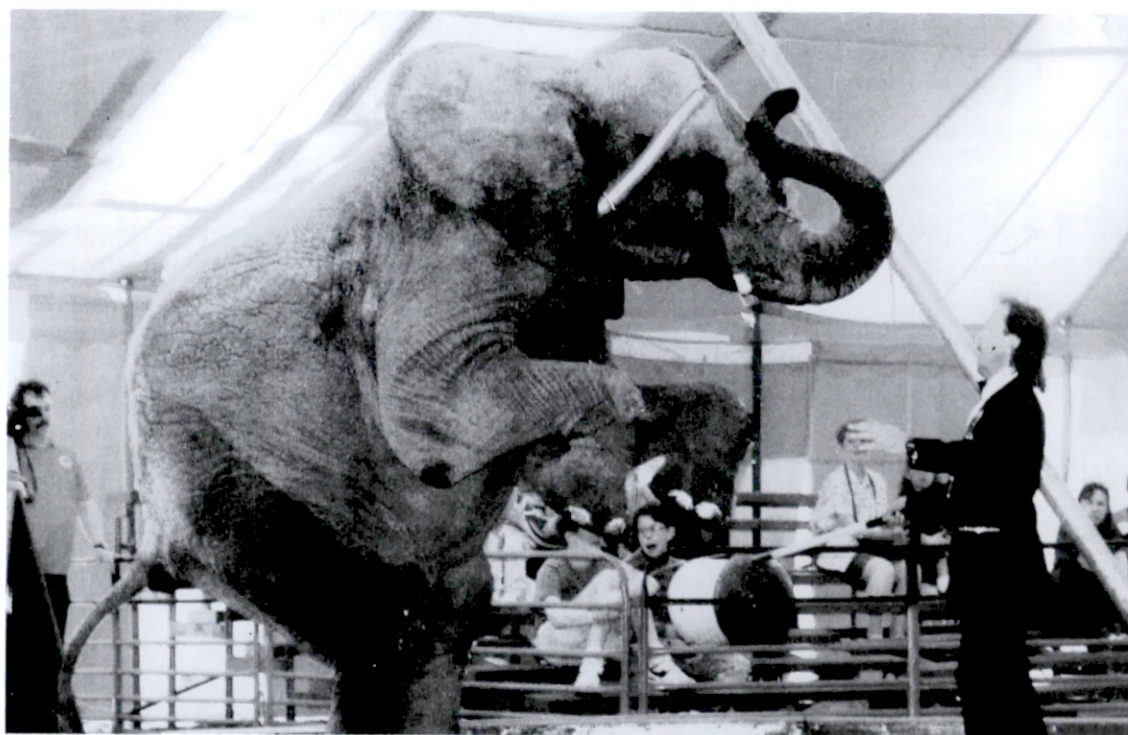
"A soul with two thoughts. Two hearts that beat as one."

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera & Video, Inc., Topeka, Kansas.



Route 4, Goshen, Connecticut 06756

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS



BILL COMMERFORD WITH KAREN

**Route 4, Box 188
Goshen, CT 06756**

Phone (860) 491-3421

Fax (860) 391-9428

CALLIOPE WAGON CAGE WAGON

**FOR
SALE!**



- ☞ Calliope wagon with Tangley Calliaphone, generator, hydraulic brakes, full fifth wheel.
- ☞ Cage wagon with double cage - completely functional.
- ☞ Tongues, double trees, etc. Ready to work!
- ☞ Chevrolet dually 1 ton 454 truck. Tandem trailer with mag wheels.

A stunning outfit!! Once in a lifetime opportunity!!
Entire package pictured, \$49,000.00 delivered. Will separate.

We make the Tangley Calliaphone Calliope.

Models starting at \$6390.00. The real thing! Send for color brochure.

MINER MANUFACTURING COMPANY

INCORPORATED

2208 220th St., Donnellson, IA 52625, FAX 319-837-6080, Ph 319-837-6486

A Circus Steward Is Born

On a cold and miserable day in January, 1901 John Staley was born in McDonald, Pennsylvania where the Staleys wintered their mud circus. They operated a fish market during the off season. At the age of five months young John was traveling on the road with the Staley's Dog and Pony Show. I do believe that is about as young as you could come to be a real first of May.

During the entire season the Staley Dog and Pony Show never ventured more than one hundred miles from their home base of McDonald; mother once told me that she was sure the show never traveled any great distance. The average daily mileage was between five and maybe twelve to fifteen. One Sunday they traveled over twenty miles between towns. In those golden days shows were not allowed to exhibit on Sunday. Pennsylvania had that "blue" law in effect until recent years.

My parents never talked about their circus days; then too they passed away when I was still a youngster, but every so often mother would open up and talk about her experiences on the circus. One story I still remember was that dad bought an old ice wagon and converted it into a ticket wagon. It was the old type one horse wagon used in those days with a wooden roof and a small window back of the driver's seat up front so that he could see if the three hundred pound cakes of ice were shifting on the hills. The back was open. It had a tailgate and a heavy canvas flap to help keep the sun from reaching the ice. So on one of the Sunday lay offs dad worked all day on the old ice wagon. He cut out openings for windows and a door. He removed the tailgate from the back of the wagon, boarding it flush with the sides, allowing an opening for a window to sell tickets. Mother said that dad had the window so high from the ground that the average person would have to reach up to buy tickets. He gave the wagon one coat of red paint, and the next day it was a circus ticket wagon. Mother was the head and only ticket seller in the new wagon. It also was our sleeping quarters at night and the storage area for the band instruments.

Another time mother told me about the band on the show. Counting the performers, workingmen and perhaps two or three bandmen, the roster never went above

THE CIRCUS STEWARD

PART VI

By John M. Staley

twelve persons. Everybody doubled in brass, including mother and dad. The advance man would bill at least two or three boroughs a day, then return to where the circus was showing. One of his jobs was to lay out the band route in each town or village, sometimes by the roadside. The five or more bandmen would all meet downtown or the center of the village. They would all set their dollar Ingersols, then each was given a sheet of paper on which was the route they were to take, the time to reach their destination, and also the time they were to start back to the center of the village. Everything was timed so that they all would reach the starting place at the same time. As each man started down the allotted street he would start to play on his instrument until reaching the other end, then at a set time he would start back, playing all the time. Like a piper the kids would follow the man. It was all timed to give a free concert at noon. In between numbers dad would give his spiel about all the wonders that could be seen on the circus grounds. After the concert the band would keep on playing until it reached the show grounds.

When the circus was loaded after the night performance, the drivers would head their wagon toward the next stop over. Mother always drove the old one horse ice wagon that had been converted into the ticket wagon. Dad also did his share of the driving. The wagons had kerosine lanterns on each side up front near the driver. It was difficult to watch for deep holes or large rocks aside of the dirt road, sometimes only a country lane. Dad would call a halt about half-

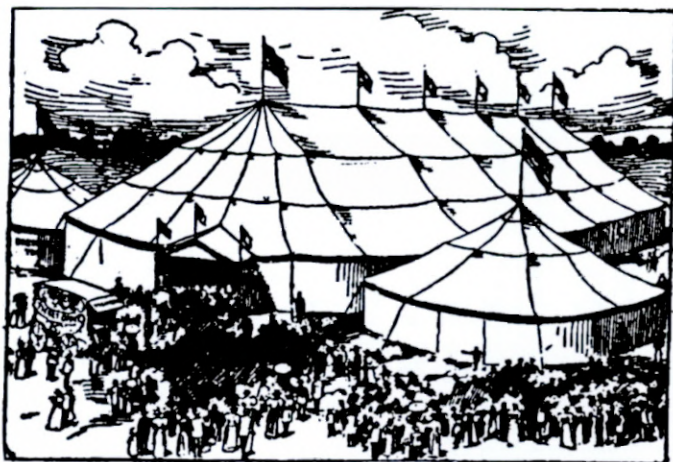
way and they would check the side of the road before pulling over to park the wagons and picket all the horses except dad's two performing horses. They were the watch dogs for the ticket wagon. Even the people in our show knew better than to come too close. The two

horses never strayed away from the ticket wagon. Then just before day-break they would feed the stock and perhaps the humans, hitch up and we would be on our way. Dad always tried to reach town when the natives were going to work and the merchants were opening their stores. If they reached the outskirts too early they would pull over and perhaps catnap until dad was ready to enter the village.

The year of 1901 was a bad season both financially and weatherwise for the Staley Dog and Pony Show. So by early fall dad gave up the ghost, called a halt, and disbanded his circus. He sold everything that farmers could use, except his two performing horses which he sold to his good friend "Doc" Spangler. Both horses lived to a good ole ripe age. The equipment he could not sell was stored in a farmer's barn up in the hills of Pennsylvania and was never claimed.

That cured dad of the circus. But in later years when the family would take a jaunt to Florida for a vacation during the winter months we would no more than get settled until dad would get itchy feet and before you could say scat he would be on the road with some carnival until it was time to start north.

One winter the entire family made the circuit with the Krause Shows. We joined out in Jacksonville, making small fairs and celebrations all the way to Key West and back to Tampa to close. It was a gilly outfit, all the rides, shows and concessions were loaded and unloaded from box cars that were rented in each town. All the men had to help each other to load the box cars on tear down night and to unload the in next town. Bennie Krause would lease a day coach from the railroad, which was spotted with the box cars early Sunday morning for the personnel of the carnival. Sometimes the coach would not appear until the box cars were loaded and ready to leave. Mother and I would go down to the local depot and try to sleep on those hard benches in the waiting room after the joints had all closed on Saturday night. To get



to Key West in those years you had to ship out of Port Tampa via boat. They had only started to build the railroad bridge from Miami to Key West over the keys. There again everything had to be gillied on and off the boat. Bennie Krause booked all the people on the carnival steerage and as soon as dad found out, he had a stateroom for the three of us. Key West was carnival mad. We were there ten days and could have stayed ten more. The show grounds was in the heart of the city on Duval Street, behind the court house. It was next to impossible to drive stakes into the coral upon which Key West sits, so everything had to be sand bagged. The confetti was so deep each morning that the city had to send dump trucks to shovel it off the rock. There were two racket stores, now known as dime stores, in Key West. Dad cleaned both stores of all the slum jewelery, glassware, dishes, even souvenir items, to replenish his still water fish pond for gifts to the players.

Back to the closing of the Staley Dog and Pony Show. That season of 1901 cured dad of ever wanting to be a circus owner again. With the few dollars he collected from the sales he was too proud to go back to his folks, who would of been more than glad to set him up in business. So he started out looking for new horizons to conquer. As I was too young I can only repeat what was told years ago. The three of us finally ended up in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, which at that time was a booming coal town. While shopping around trying to find some sort of business dad would drop into the local pool room to cool his aching feet and watch the men playing for money. I have been told that dad thought he was a big city slicker when it came to shooting pool. Before long he was egging to get in the big money game. To make a long story short it was not long until all the money he had stashed away for his new business venture was in the pockets of the local pool sharks.

That pitfall did not faze him. By hook and crook he promoted a small lunch counter near the street car barn. When I say small that is what I mean. Over five people would of been a turn away. Uniontown is a hilly town no matter which way you turn. This lunch stand was sitting on stilts about fifteen feet high so that the stand would be flush with the side walk. Mother told me the first three days they served bean soup and bread, nothing else. Then they started to add more food items. Before they knew it they were having more business than they could

handle. The name of the lunch stand was the "White Elephant." It turned out to be the golden elephant. Dad was always looking far ahead. In the years to come he would open a restaurant, catering to the workingmen. After he had a good business going, he would sell out and take a trip to Florida for the family. Then back to Uniontown to open another restaurant. It did not matter in what part of town the restaurant was located, it would not be any time until he had all his old customers back in the fold. At times I do believe some of his attitude must of brushed off onto me, as have I have always catered to the workingman on any circus where I operated the cook house.

A Circus Steward

I have checked the dime store dictionary to the deluxe editions that are found in your local library. The following definitions were the closest that really could define a steward, but not a circus steward: "A man who manages another's property or financial affairs. Employees aboard ship who wait on tables, attend the staterooms. A person appointed to manage a dinner, ball, show, etc. One of a staff of servants on a passenger ship. One in charge of the provisions in kitchen, as in a club or dining car. A man who takes charge of the food and table services for a club, ship or railroad train."

With all the above categories pertaining to a steward contain nary a

Mr. and Mrs. John Staley on the Clyde Beatty Circus in 1948. Circus World Museum collection.



word about a circus steward. Before I delve into the workings of the circus steward I will have to draw a line onto stewards who call themselves that but are only a cook at best. You will find this true on the smaller cook house or where the men are fed from the pie car.

There have been a large group of men dedicated wholly and earnestly to the purpose of providing good wholesome food at all times to the entire personnel of the circus. Only a handful learn the workings of every angle of the cook house. Such men I can count on one hand, Alfred "Ollie" Webb, Charles Henry, Laughing George Davis and Mitt Carroll. There were others, but I have named the cream of the crop.

Now we will see just what it takes to be called a good circus steward.

The steward must at all times know how to purchase food and how to use the food after it has been purchased. He must be able to cook, bake, and probably at one time or another to wash dishes. He must know how to meet people, to handle men in his department and be a born diplomat at all times.

After all the above he still has to be a jack of all trades. He must know every inch of his domain, which is not learned in one lesson. If he has to lay out the cook house lot, he can do it.

He must also be able to spot all the cook house wagons as they arrive on the circus grounds and know what to do in case of a storm or any other disaster that plagues the outdoor world.

In case of a major accident he must know how to repair any damage done to the equipment or replace it at once. He must know how to splice rope or cable, to be able to use a palm and needle, using a baseball stitch in repairing torn side wall or main tent canvas. Aside from all these qualifications he must be a good man who can make instant decisions.

The House That John Built

"John Ringling was a large man, enjoyed good food, was not a glutton." These thoughts kept running through my mind as the actor E. G. Marshall was trying to depict the breakfast that John Ringling always enjoyed.

It was early in the afternoon of Sunday, June 24th, 1973, a date I will never forget, as I had just been released from the hospital after a three week sojourn for an operation. I was sitting in the living room, having had my share of bed for a while. Tired of reading the Sunday paper,



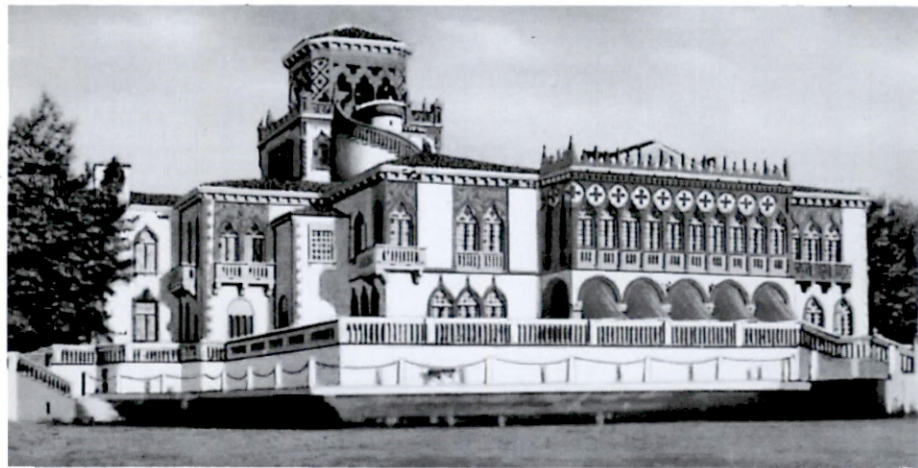
The great hall of the Ringling residence in Sarasota, Florida.

I'd turned on the TV, and was catching the last part of the documentary *Ca'd'zan, The House That John Built*. The narrator entered the huge dining room.

Standing behind the host chair at the vast oblong table he informed the viewers that this was where John Ringling had taken his large breakfast. When the moderator was seated in the host chair, waiters in heavy formal attire started to bring in large trays. As each tray was placed in front of him, he would comment. "This was a tray of grapefruit," he would say, or "This was a tray of oranges," "This was a tray of cherries," "This was a tray of meat and eggs," As the last tray was put in place, I do believe he said that occasionally John Ringling would throw in a Porterhouse steak for good measure.

I was sorry to have missed the be-

The Ringling residence as viewed from Sarasota Bay.



ginning of the commentary as I am sure it was well worth the time. After all, John Ringling was a Horatio Alger character if ever there was one. Indeed it seemed there was no holding back any of the five Ringling brothers; they just kept going up the ladder of success. John was the richest of the Ringling family, and at one time was considered one of the wealthiest men in the world. That one scene of Marshall sitting down at the huge banquet table overflowing with food seemed to come out of a Mack Sennett comedy. Even the Keystone Cops had been thrown in for good measure—all duked out as waiters. I am sure there must have been a breakfast nook in "the house that John built," and that it was not necessary for them to have used the main dining room to have breakfast. Also, neither John nor Charles Ringling went overboard in having too many household help, except if they were having a large array of guests. At these times, they would bring in help from the outside.

John and Mabel had four steady, year-around employees. We used to call them the "Four Horsemen," and they

consisted of a husband and wife team (who together were the maid, valet, butler, and houseman), Willie the Japanese cook, and the chauffeur. This crew of four covered the home in Sarasota, summer home on the Palisades (overlooking the Hudson River), the private Pullman car *Jomar* and the houseboat-yacht *Zolophus*. It was nothing to talk with them today and learn that they'd be gone tomorrow--back to New York City. The yacht, incidentally, had its own cook to feed the crew.

During the circus seasons of the years that I was private waiter for the Ringling clan, I was called upon by John Ringling several time to help Willie serve in the palatial private Pullman car *Jomar*.

He had left the other three Horsemen at the summer home in Jersey.

John Ringling, besides owning a circus, had numerous other business ventures. He and *Jomar* would be gone for weeks from the circus grounds. He was a director of many railroads, had his own freight railroad, owned a number of oil fields, and was a major stockholder in the Madison Square Garden in New York City.

After my first stay on the *Jomar* I could have found my way around blindfolded. It was the same routine year after year. Before going to bed I would take about a pound of large black Bing cherries out of the refrigerator, remove the stems--wash, clean and then pit them--and then put them in a covered dish and back into the ice box. John would not eat them unless they were pitted, and if I forgot to fix them, he let me know the next day.

First thing in the morning I would prepare the grapefruit. If they were large, I would pick out four or five. If they ran small, I would throw in a couple more to make up the difference, then I'd have the grapefruit, seed it, cut away the meat from the membranes, and put it back into the refrigerator. Then I would set the table in the dining alcove. Some mornings Mabel Ringling would come out for a sip and a bite, otherwise she would ring for her breakfast in bed. The narrator made another mistake when he mentioned that a large tray of oranges were included in his breakfast menu. The only oranges I ever saw on the *Jomar* were for the orange juice that Mabel Ringling had for breakfast. Another mistake Marshall made concerned John Ringling always having had his breakfast around three in the afternoon. Though this might have been true on occasion, each time I was on the *Jomar*, it was around 1:30. You

could almost tell the time of day by when Mr. John would press the buzzer that told Willie and me he was up and around. It would be around one o'clock, give a few minutes one way or the other. It was also the signal for me to get a split bottle of Vichy water from the refrigerator. This he had with his shower.

Willie would start to arrange his pots and saute skillets on the stove, so that they would be warm when he put up the food. Then he'd ready some boiled water for the eggs. A short while later the buzzer would ring twice, the signal for Willie to start the breakfast, and for me to get out the bowl of cherries and place the grapefruits on a huge silver tray.

After the grapefruits were ready, I would cut another one and squeeze juice from it into the cavities where I had taken out the seeds. I would not bring in the grapefruits to Mr. John, however, until after he had eaten the bowl of cherries. A final buzz told me it was time to enter his stateroom to tie his shoes and at times, help him into his coat. John Ringling was a very neat dresser, one whose tie and coat had to hang just a certain way, even for breakfast in the *Jomar*.

Meanwhile Willie would be busy in his galley. He seemed at times to have eight arms, all going at the same time. While I was waiting for Mr. John to finish off the cherries and grapefruit, I'd often watch Willie putting his food together. Into a large mixing bowl he would put three or four one pound cans of corned beef hash, then he would add some cooked diced potatoes and chopped green onion tops. He'd

throw in two or three raw eggs, mix all the ingredients together, and then put them into the heavy duty saute skillet. He would have already peeled and sliced the raw potatoes, and had them standing in cold water. Now he would dry them off and put them in another iron skillet along with some sliced onions.

After Mr. John had finished the platter of grapefruit, I would take away the tray and used plate, crumb off the table, get a warm plate from Willie and place it in front of John. Then I brought out the large platter of corned beef hash. It really looked like a painting, every particle of the meat being a deep tan. It was molded like all good cooks shape omelets. Perched on top would be eight to ten soft boiled eggs.

Placing the platter within easy reach of Mr. Ringling, I then brought the American fried potatoes (all a golden brown). Sometimes he would also have a slice of toast. When the platters were about empty, I would bring a carafe of Sanka coffee and alcohol burner. Then, going to the serving buffet I'd bring out one of his special cigars. They were Panatella in shape, made of clear Havana tobacco from Cuba, and had had most of the nicotine removed. As he picked up his cigar, I was "Johnny on the spot," lighting it with a wooden kitchen match. Suddenly, as if by signal, the staff chauffeur would appear on the *Jomar*. Shortly after, Mr. John would leave for the circus grounds.

The breakfast schedule on the *Jomar* was the same day after day and year after year, whenever I was called to help Willie the cook serve John and Mabel Ringling. Mr. Ringling kept to this

schedule so faithfully that I have my doubts that anyone could have changed his routine, except the President of the United States. Occasionally, exactly that happened, and when the President and his party were coming to the afternoon performance of the Greatest Show on Earth--then, and only then would John Ringling be on the circus grounds before one o'clock.

Three different times Mr. John asked me to serve and supervise the candy butchers and to see that the guest of honor was given "the royal treatment." Woodrow Wilson, Calvin Coolidge and Warren G. Harding attended performances, and I do believe that Harding was his favorite. We were in Canada the day of Harding's funeral, as a matter of fact, and John Ringling cancelled the afternoon performance.

When a presidential party came to see a show, they found the entire center section of the chair seats reserved. The first five rows were vacant, with the next ten rows allocated to John Ringling and his special party. About five rows behind them, the F. B. I. and Secret Service men took over. No doubt there were also plain clothes police and detectives from the District of Columbia. They could not be spotted throughout the audience though, and the regular circus customers were not aware of their presence.

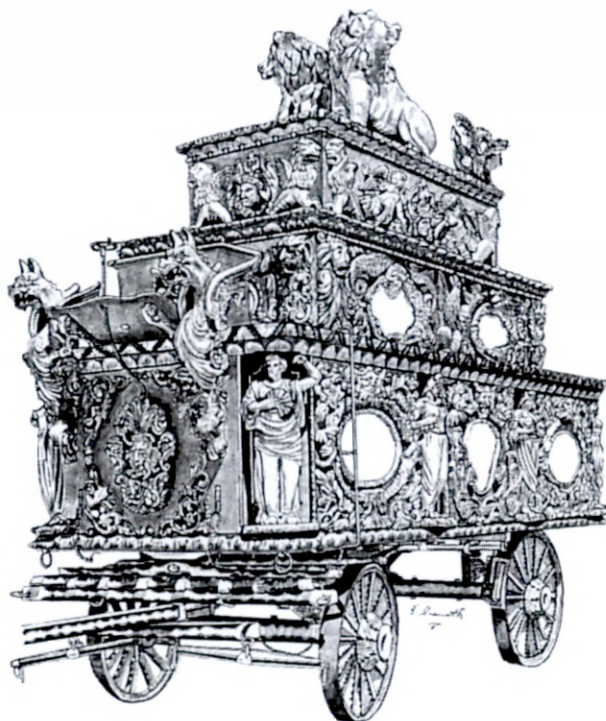
Often the behind-the-scenes trappings of what appeared to be an average, everyday performance gave it the over-all feeling of a first rate cloak-and-dagger mystery story.

MAIL AUCTION OF THE TOM PARKINSON BOOK and PROGRAM COLLECTION

This is one of the largest collection of circus books and programs offered at one time in over a decade. Included are many rare volumes.

For a list and bidding instruction send \$2 and SASE to:

Fred D. Pfening III
1075 W. Fifth Ave.
Columbus, Ohio 43212



Antique Circus Wagons Limited Edition Prints

**Beautiful Ebony Point Drawings
Hand Signed and Numbered By Artist
First in a series of 3 prints
11" x 14" size on museum
quality art paper**

**For Band Wagon Members
Specially Priced at \$19.95 plus \$5.00
shipping and handling/\$24.95 Total**

Money order or check payable to

**(Rote Rew Address)
Granrath Fine Art
1962 S. 83rd Street
West Allis, WI 53219**



SEASON'S GREETINGS

To the Circus Historical Society

We were pleased to host your 1995 convention.



**HOLIDAY
GREETINGS
TO OUR
FRIENDS
OLD
AND NEW.
WE WISH YOU
THE
SEASON'S
BEST.**



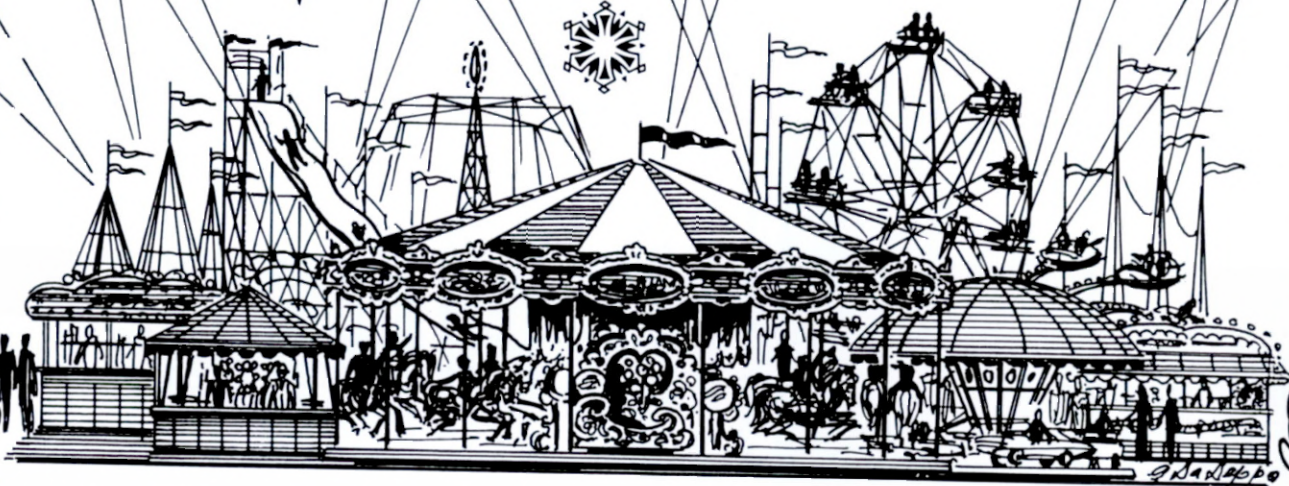
If you would like one of our 1996 Circus Calendars, send \$2.00 to cover postage/handling to:
GRAPHICS 2000 • 6290 Harrison Drive, Suite 16 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89120



WISHES
YOU AND YOURS

Happy Holidays!

JIM ELLIOTT
GENERAL MANAGER



WANTED

Original circus and carnival posters pre-1930 vintage preferred.

From rare hard to find posters to accumulations.

Call, Write or Fax
(818) 887-5137 Fax (816) 887-2646

Tam's Apparatus Co., Inc.

BDA Authentic Cinema Collectibles
and Circus Related Collectibles
20969 Ventura Blvd. #203
Woodland Hills, CA 91364
Harvey Dunn, President



*The Real Christmas Feeling
That Warms Friendly Glow
Comes From Greeting The People
I'm So Happy To Know
May There come To You At This Holiday
Season All The Precious Things of Life
Health, Happiness and Enduring Friendships.*

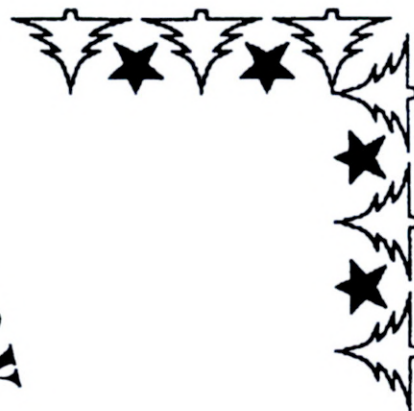
Earl Schmid



**FAMOUS COLE
INDOOR VARIETY
CIRCUS**

From
Elida Entertainment Inc.
Ron & Willene Bacon
Larry & Cheryl Allmon

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year



Over fifty Circus Historical Society members and guests gathered in San Antonio, Texas, October 19-21 for their annual convention. Most of the activities took place in the spacious halls of the Hertzberg Circus Collection and Museum.

The highlight of the meeting was nine papers presented by members. The quantity and quality of the papers was the finest presented in recent years.

On Thursday, October 19, Bill Slout lead off the speakers by outlining the history of circus balloon accessions in "What Goes Up . . . Comes Down."

"Circus ballooning began in 1870 and it was an awesome spectacle," Slout said. "These guys had more daring than intelligence and some were killed." He traced ballooning from its beginning in 1783 through the first American circus exhibition in 1793 to regular use by circuses in 1873.

"They were used by railroad and boat shows for the next 50 years," Slout said. "The magic of flying was the fulfillment of childhood fantasy. Perhaps it was public interest or perhaps civil war use that made them so popular" as the hydrogen-filled contraptions soared over crowds.

Next, one of the most grandiose circus spectacles of all time was thoroughly described by former CHS president John Polacsek as he enthralled listeners with "The Barnum & Bailey Flotilla of 1898."

The display opened at the Olympia in London on Boxing Day. It was titled "A Day at Coney Island U.S.A." and utilized a tank 375 feet by 40 feet filled with 400,000 gallons of water. Among the events depicted were the Battle of Santiago, Cuba, during the Spanish-American War.

"This spectacle was immense," Polacsek said. "In addition to swimming, log rolling and water polo contests, the Santiago conflict was staged. The U.S. Fleet appeared in scaled-down battleships 20 feet long and opened fire, guns on shore returned fire, cruisers chased torpedo boats and a sailing ship caught fire."

The eleven boats, scaled replicas of real warships, were powered by electricity and had one-man crews. Santiago Bay was recreated with forts built on risers. Simulated noise replicating the confusion of war filled the giant hall. The show exhibited in London from December to April.

"Bloomington, Illinois, Circus History" was aptly chronicled by Steve Gossard, a resident of that city. Renowned circus names filled the air as Gossard described the activities of the

THE 1995 CHS CONVENTION

By Edward F. Swenson

many show people who lived there.

The Flying Fishers return act practiced in an area barn with Minnie Fisher reportedly working the first iron jaw act in 1898. There were other tales of Downie Bros. Circus caught in a blizzard, train wrecks, fun in the Barnum & Bailey cookhouse on the Fourth of July and information about Ed Lamar and the Troupe Lamar.

After lunch, Hertzberg administrator Robert O'Connor, Ph.D. and staff members outlined the activities and goals of the museum and collection. "We are looking at who we are and where we are going. We want to capitalize on tourism here," he said, citing San Antonio's ten million annual visitors.

He said Harry Hertzberg was a lawyer, state senator, avid circus collector and rare book collector. His collection is housed at the museum, including 20,000 circus items and 8,600 volumes. Tourists comprise 75 percent of the facility's attendance. The collection was put on display in 1942.

"We want to re-interpret and re-

CHS members on the steps of the Hertzberg Museum in San Antonio. Fred Pfening photo.

display the collection," O'Connor said. "We'll have temporary or changing exhibits and plan two that are traditions in the Southwest, Mexican circuses and wild west shows. We want to tie the whole museum into education, using docents. We also have a specialized 3,500-volume library for circus researchers."

The museum's recently employed archivist, John Slate, told CHS members he wanted to make the collection as accessible as possible. The circus archives include 7,500 photographs, hundreds of route books and programs and about 3,500 posters.

He described the Emil Roe art work collection, P. T. Barnum letters, the Tom Thumb material and scrapbooks. "We have pamphlets, brochures and notes by historians in vertical files, but there is still much circus material and the indexes are rather incomplete. My goal is access for you and me," Slate said.

Visual materials include the large poster collection, an art collection, photos organized by performers, animals, sideshow performers, and Keltly and Atwell photographs. In addition, the museum has thousands of artifacts including costumes and props.

Rick Casagrande of the museum staff outlined an upcoming exhibit on "carpas," a combination of Mexican carpas (or theaters) and Mexican "Circos" or circuses in the Southwest. They exhibited wire and small animal acts and had stages for pantomime and vaudeville-type acts.

"I want people to walk into the exhibit and know what a carpa was like





Convention speakers Orin King, Richard Reynolds, John Polacsek, Stuart Thayer, Jim Dunwoody, Bill Slout and Ted Bowman in front of the Gentry Bros. ticket wagon. Fred Pfenning photo.

and I need your help in gathering materials," Casagrande said. He said carpas began around the turn of the century and existed until the 1950s.

Curator of Education Barbara Celitans said 12,000 students visit the museum each year. "The circus is a multicultural institution," she said, "and we tell students that the circus is the basis of what we have today. It leads into math and science. And the circus is a multi-cultural institution. People in the circus respected each other's cultures. Here at the museum we try to stress the circus as a business."

Thursday evening the group moved east half a block to Casa Rio, a Mexican restaurant overlooking San Antonio's famed Riverwalk, for a reception, auction and a dinner of "Tex-Mex" foods including enchiladas and tamales. The auction raised \$1,151 for CHS. Donors included Tom Dunwoody, Niall McCabe, Jim and Millicent Dunwoody, Steve Gossard, Warren Wood, Tex and Ann Copeland, Ken Harck, Joe Rettinger, Fred Pfenning III, Don Ballard, Dale and Evelyn Riker, John Polacsek and Walter and Dorita Estes.

The first speaker on October 20 was past CHS president Stuart Thayer, who revealed "The Circus that Inspired the Ringlings." He said that Alf Ringling had published the "life story" of the Ringling brothers in 1900 and wrote that the first circus the boys ever saw was on a steamboat in McGregor, Iowa, in the 1860s. A performer visited their dad's leather shop and gave him a family ticket.

Thayer posed the question, "When did they live in McGregor?" His answer was December 1862 to April 1871. Earl Chapin May in his famed

The Circus from Rome to Ringling wrote that it happened in the summer of 1870 and that it was the Dan Rice show.

Thayer demonstrated that Rice didn't play McGreger in 1870, and then disclosed the circus they likely saw.

To further confuse things, Charles Ringling in 1921 said the Rice show was the first circus he saw.

Thayer finished with the comment, "Aft. T. and Charles' memories surely can be forgiven."

CHS vice president Richard J. Reynolds III next explored "Gorillas Before Gargantua," the famous ape that first appeared in 1938 on Ringling-Barnum. "Gargantua's only rival was Jumbo and the gorilla was seen by far more people than Jumbo," Reynolds said.

In 1855, George Wamwold exhibited a gorilla in a traveling menagerie in England. During the 1880s and 1890s, gorillas were placed in Berlin, Antwerp and London zoos. In 1897 a male gorilla came to Boston, but died within five days.

The Bronx Zoo got two gorillas in 1914 and both soon died. In 1921, Ringling-Barnum brought John Daniel to the United States. He died 27 days after he arrived. Ringling exhibited a gorilla named Sultan in 1923. It went the full tour and was then returned to England.

The gorilla Susie toured France in 1927, coming to America by dirigible in 1929. In 1930, she was on the Johnny J. Jones Carnival, Ringling-Barnum and 101 Wild West. The next year she was in the Ringling side show, after which she went to the Cincinnati Zoo. She was the last gorilla shown in the U.S. until the appearance of Gargantua.

Jim Dunwoody gave a biographical sketch of a show musician named Dan Bodder, who lived in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, when he wasn't on the road with one show or another. Dunwoody found an eight-by-twelve inch plumbing catalog full of scrapbook-type material on Bodder.



John Polacsek, Fred Dahlinger and Dorita Estes conducting the auction. Fred Pfenning photo.

Born about 1872, Bodder first played with Hazlet & Siverd's Minstrels in 1886, progressing to Welch Bros. Circus in 1901, Gentry Bros. Famous Shows United in 1903, Great Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Enormous Shows United in 1905 (at \$11 a week), and Barnum & Bailey in 1910, where he played the bass drum for \$15 a week.

He spent the remainder of his career with such shows as Christy Bros., Hagenbeck-Wallace and Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin Shows, where in 1925 he was paid \$35 a week. He died in Chambersburg on February 1, 1937.

After lunch conventioners were divided into two groups. While one group watched circus videos, the other was taken to the Hertzberg's third floor archives where John Slate explained the cataloging and preservation of the collection.

"They are all available to the serious historian. All we ask is that you give us advance notice," Slate said.

The guest speaker at Friday night's banquet in the Hertzberg was Don B. Wilmeth, a visiting professor at Trinity University in San Antonio. He talked about "Freaks, Fantasmagorias & Fan Dancers: The World of Popular Amusements."

"I am trying to develop in young people an interest in American popular entertainment, especially the circus," Wilmeth said. "I'm interested in high definition performance or HDP. This is usually found in actors, athletes, even strippers. It encompasses teams like Smith & Dale and the Siamese twins Chang and Eng."

He said that "popular art reflects the concerns of society, as espoused by Russell Nye. Popular entertainment was created for average people."

Museums like Barnum's in 1841 es-

established a format for mass entertainment, appealing to unsophisticated people, Wilmeth said. The minstrel shows of 1840-70 and medicine shows, which thrived between 1870 and 1930, were popular.

"The wild west shows were popular, but were dumped by the movies and television. Amusement parks had their day from 1900 to World War II. About 500 traveling carnivals remain," Wilmeth said. "Vaudeville took over from the minstrel shows. It was big business and gave the people what they wanted and shaped their feelings."

He described American burlesque as a "completely native form. It was healthy, raucous entertainment, with comics dominating." Wilmeth said side shows, popular in the 1930s and 1940s, are almost extinct today.

"It's vital we preserve the popular forms of entertainment. And a way must be found to engender interest in our youngsters," he concluded.

On October 21 Orin King fascinated conventioners with "The Rare Female Pygopus," described as a "double-headed girl (Siamese) with two heads, two shoulders, one body, four arms and four legs. These African-American girls, named Millie and Christine, were well-formed, weighed one hundred and thirty-nine pounds, were intelligent and in good health."

They spoke English, German, French, Italian and Spanish.

King said the girls had feeling together below the hips. They were so unusual that they were exhibited in Europe for eight years during the 1870s as well as touring the United States. Millie and Christine died in 1912.

Ted Bowman majored in management and accounting in college and was employed by Ford Motor Co. until D. R. Miller of Carson & Barnes Circus offered him a job. Bowman spoke to conventioners about "The Art of the Circus Business."

"Dory [Miller] wanted me to drive a semi and pull a trailer. Well, I put the rig in a ditch and then hit another truck. That ended my driving career," Bowman said. "All our drivers are now trained in Hugo, and they are then stolen from us by trucking companies."

He said inspectors give shows a lot of grief. In one small town, inspectors said the tent was unsafe, so Carson & Barnes executives moved the performance outside, next to the tent, to foil the bureaucrats.

Bowman said it costs

CHS CONVENTIONEERS EXPLORE THE HERTZBERG CIRCUS COLLECTION

Attendees to Circus Historical Society's 1995 convention were hosted by the Hertzberg Circus Collection and Museum and its administrator, Robert O'Conner.

The collection was gathered over many years by San Antonio circus fan Harry Hertzberg. It consists of more than 20,000 items about the American circus during its existence from 1793 to the late 1930s.

While the collection's strength lies in rare posters and handbills, thousands of other items are either displayed or in kept in archives for serious circus historians.

One of the collection's highlights is a rare poster advertising the R. Sands & Co. Hippoferaen Arena of 1849. The poster is 10 feet high and almost five feet wide. In the photographic collection are about 100 of Edward J. Kelty's panoramic circus images taken during the 1920s and 1930s.

In addition there are many slides, 16mm and 8mm films, video tapes, personal and business-related correspondence relating to Hertzberg, manuscripts, press clippings, business records, and 1,650 copies of the *New York Clipper*. A specialized library contains approximately 3,000 titles devoted to the American circus and popular culture, including many rare books.

The collection and museum is housed in a 1930s art-deco building on the San Antonio River that once was the San Antonio Public Library's main downtown facility. The three-story building, is located at 210 W. Market Street, just three blocks south of the famed Alamo. Two floors contain exhibits and meeting space and the circus archives and rare books are housed in special rooms on the third floor.

Items on display in gallery areas include a Gentry Bros. parade and ticket wagon built in 1902, extensive P. T. Barnum memorabilia including the coach Barnum commissioned in 1843 for Gen. Tom Thumb, a large scale model of a 1920s tented railroad circus with an interpretive audio program, and materials from Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

Hertzberg, who died in 1940 at the age of 56, bequeathed his entire collection to the San Antonio Public Library and the Hertzberg Circus Collection and Museum is a division of the library. It is open Monday through Saturday during the fall and winter from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. There is a small admission charge.

\$21,000 to break even each day and \$2,500-\$3,500 to move the show from one stand to another. They sell up to 4,000 tickets per performance and 90 percent of their sponsors are repeats. The big top costs about \$250,000 and lasts three years with normal wear.

"The New American Circus" was the subject of Ernest Albrecht, who gave

Archivist John Slate and Ken Harck examining material in the Hertzberg archives. Fred Pfening photo.

the final paper Saturday morning.

"What is new? Everything and nothing," he said. "They have re-arranged old ingredients and presented them in a new way."

He said the "new" one-ring show, as compared with the traditional three-ring circus, creates a new and more intimate relationship with the audience. "Watching the performance is no problem, since you have only one ring to hold attention," Albrecht said.

"These shows, including the New Pickle Circus, Big Apple, Circus Flora and Cirque du Soleil, have introduced plot structure or storylines. They are there to enhance the circus and not take away from it," he said. "The allied arts also figure in, including dance, music and lighting."

He said that there seems to be an implied criticism of animal use, but exclusion appeared to be a practical matter relating to costs and other factors. Albrecht also said the new-type shows are not hospitable to circus fans.



Charles Davenport of the King Royal Circus was on hand during the session and distributed posters of the show to those in attendance.

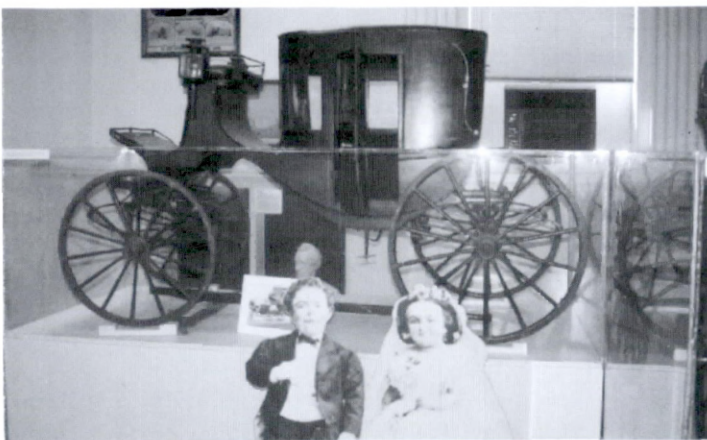
After lunch on Saturday, the group attended the afternoon performance of the Alzafar Shrine Circus, produced by George Carden, at Freeman Coliseum in San Antonio. Carden welcomed the group and provided each with a circus pin. CHS members were delighted to see Peggy MacDonald, widow of famous elephant trainer Mack McDonald, who was visiting the show.

The circus was the final convention activity.

THE 1996 CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION

Baraboo, Wisconsin, the home of the Gollmars and the Ringlings and now the location of the Circus World Museum, will be the location of the 1996 convention of the Circus Historical Society. The dates for the event, Monday, July 15, to Wednesday, July 17, fall immediately after the July 14 Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee.

The convention has been scheduled so that registrants can visit the Milwaukee showgrounds on Saturday, July 13, and view the parade on Sunday. The Royal Hanneford Circus will again be featured at the showgrounds, along with other attractions. Though there will be no arranged convention events in Milwaukee, registrants will be able to pick up their registration



Tom Thumb's coach on display in the Hertzberg. Fred Pfening photo.

materials at the showgrounds in Milwaukee. They can then travel to Baraboo for the formal convention events starting on Monday morning.

Prepared papers and panel discussions on circus topics will highlight the gathering. An exhibition of some of the Museum's rare lithographs will enliven one session and attendees will also see a special performance of the newly created Circus Music exhibit. An all-new CWM circus big top performance will be viewed the same day. The ever-popular CHS auction, with its multitude of bargains, followed by a high-quality catered supper, will fill one evening. A stellar banquet event, with a special guest speaker, will provide a second evening of pleasure.

The Great Circus Train, with its precious load of wagons, will return to Baraboo the evening of July 17. Members who remain in Baraboo after the con-

vention will have the opportunity to pursue their own research interests in the Museum's Library and Research Center.

Make your plans now to join in the fellowship and fun of the 1996 CHS convention. Whether a long time advocate, new member or curious onlooker, you will find the schedule of events for the 1996 convention to be pleasing. The formal registration form will be in an upcoming issue of *Bandwagon*. Members desiring to participate by presenting a paper, offering assistance during the event or contributing to the auction are urged to contact convention chairperson Fred Dahlinger at their convenience.

Registrants should co-ordinate their own reservations for hotel and motel lodging in both Milwaukee and Baraboo. Early, guaranteed, reservations are strongly recommended, given the popularity of the parade and associated activities. In Baraboo, a block of 25 rooms has been made at the convenient and full service Quality Inn for the nights of July 14 to 16 inclusive (rooms are not available there the night of July 17) at the special reduced rates of \$53.00 for single and \$58.00 for double occupancy. Reservations can be made by calling 1-800-355-6422. The reservation cutoff date is June 15. Other lodging and tourist information is available from the Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce by calling 1-800-BARABOO.



LET US REMEMBER THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Mary Virginia O'Neal, Gregory Stone and Harry Hammond

CIRCUSDOM'S ROYAL FAMILY

BACK ISSUES OF
BANDWAGON

1966-Jan.-Feb.
1967-July-Aug., Nov.-Dec.
1968-All but Jan.-Feb.
1969-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.
1971-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.
1972-All available.
1973-All but Nov.-Dec.
1974-All but Mar.-Ap.; May-June.
1975-All available.
1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.
1977-All but Mar.-Ap.
1978-All available.
1979-All but Jan.-Feb.
1980-1986-All available.
1987-All but Nov.-Dec.
1988-1995-All available.

Price is \$3.00 each. Add \$2.00 postage for one issue, \$5.00 for more than one issue. Please select substitutes in case we are out of any of above.

BANDWAGON BACK ISSUES
2515 DORSET RD.
COLUMBUS, OH 43221



Do you have our current
95-P catalog?
If not you are missing out.
We carry the best in
"HO" and "O"
Circus Kits, Books,
Posters
and collectibles.
We've got something for
everybody.

Send \$4.00 to:

STAR CIRCUS SUPPLIES
3037 Grass Valley Hwy.
Auburn, CA 95602

**ANNALS OF THE
AMERICAN CIRCUS**

Vol. I, (1793-1828)
(Reprint)

Vol. II, (1830-1847)
Vol. III, (1848-1860)

Thirty dollars each or three
volumes for seventy-five dol-
lars. As of December 1 we
have but five sets remaining

Vol. I and III remain in
good supply, but Vol. II is
about to disappear.

If the antebellum circus
has any interest for you, now
is the time to act.

Stuart Thayer
430 17th Avenue, East
Seattle, WA 98112



**SEASON'S
GREETINGS**

**To all our old
and new**

Friends

NEW
Early Indiana Circuses
1823-1940

WAIT FOR THE MUNCIE BOYS

The development of the Indiana circus industry from the early 1800s circus visits along the Ohio and Wabash rivers to the turn of the century and beyond.

A book about performers and other colorful personalities of the golden age of the circus.

Scores of illustrations--hard bound--150 pages--
 \$22.00 pp.
 (Indiana res. add 5% sales tax.)

Order from Frederick Graham
 1104 N. Briar Road
 Muncie, IN 47304

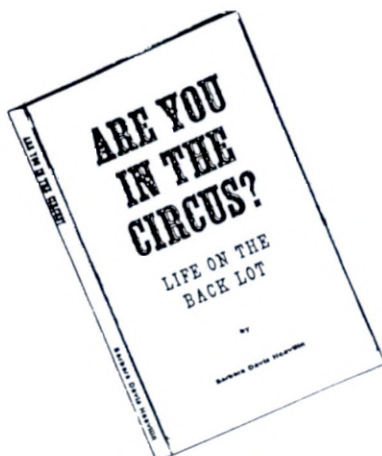
The Wizard of the Wire

By Mark St Leon

The one the only Con Colleano. The supreme of the tightwire who thrilled and fascinated kings, dictators, Ringling and many millions during his career. For the first time ever, his story has been told in the words of those who knew him best.

To order your air mailed copy send your personal check for US \$35 to:

Mark St Leon
 64 Clieveden Street
 North Perth WA 6006
 Australia



By
 Barbara Davis Heavilin

*A fictional story of a
 fourth generation, young
 flyer.*

\$20.95 soft cover; \$27.95 hard
 cover; Indiana buyers add 5%
 sales tax.

Toby Tyler was written in 1890. This book answers the adults, children, and teachers who asked, "What about the circus of today?" It is fiction, however, events in the story are what today's mud shows face.

Heavilin traveled with Circus Genoa for 8 months in 1979 and with Carson & Barnes for 2 months in 1985. This is her second book.

The Circus attracts Children of All Ages. It closes the generation gap!

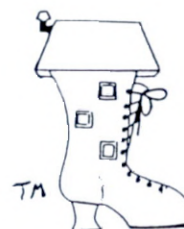
Make checks or money order payable to:

SHOE HOUSE PUBLICATIONS
 P. O. Box 2421
 Richmond, IN 47375

copies, soft cover _____

copies, hard cover _____

Enclosed \$ _____



**SHOE HOUSE
 PUBLICATIONS**

P.O. Box 2421
 Richmond, IN 47375

(Please Print)

Ship to
 Name: _____
 Street: _____
 City: _____
 State: _____ Zip Code: _____
 Autograph to: _____

1896

J. B. McMahon of Wichita, Kansas, ran an ad in the New York *Clipper*, January 11, 1896, recruiting personnel for Sands & Astley's Great Railroad Show, Circus, Menagerie and Hippodrome for the coming season.

Wanted were "First Class Performers, Riders, Gymnasts, Aerialists, Trained Animal Exhibits, Curiosities, Animate and Inanimate, Door Talker, etc."

Also wanted were "Thoroughly Competent Contracting Agents and Bill-posters," but "only those of circus experience need apply. Inquiries should be directed to G. Castello." At the end of the ad those interested were instructed to "include no stamps."

Sands & Astley did not take the road in 1896, but the show went forth as Bond Bros.' World's Best Shows. The *Wichita Daily Eagle* on April 1 announced the opening with a two day stand in Wichita on April 17 and 18.

"The busiest place in or around Wichita at present," according to the *Eagle*, "is the Gilbert Plow works where the winter quarters of McMahon's circus is located." The lengthy story was obviously the work of a press agent for in spite of its length the story conveyed little concrete information.

"Twelve fine extra ring horses have been purchased and they are noble Kentucky animals. Two or three professional horse barbers are now at work on the animals trimming their tails and manes and fixing them up for company."

An anonymous "crack rider of the world will be in Mr. McMahon's show this year. He has just arrived from Havana, Cuba. He can throw a double somersault backward and forward on the back of a horse running at full speed.

"Professor Scott, the animal man, arrived from Philadelphia yesterday."

The unnamed "smallest man and woman in Indiana will be here in a few days to join the side show.

"The candidates for roustabouts are as thick as flies about the place every day, and if Mr. McMahon wanted 1,000 of them he would have no trouble in finding them.

"Mr. McMahon has received \$5,000 worth of paper for street

ONLY BIG SHOW COMING

The Crowning Climax of Exhibitional Grandeur

Vol. IV, Chapter Seven, Part One

By Orin Copple King

Copyright © 1995, Orin Copple King

board advertising and has some more coming.

"The opening engagement will be for the benefit of the Auditorium and the proceeds will be used in its completion.

"Mr. McMahon will come back to winter next year again."

The tents were pitched at Thirteenth Street and Topeka Avenue. Before the opening the *Eagle* ran several handouts. No performances had yet been given when the press department proclaimed that, "hundreds attend Bond Brothers' shows daily that are not in the habit of going to circuses."

"On account of benefit of the Audi-

Illustration from a herald used by Bond Bros. in 1896. Pfening Archives.

orium the admission prices are reduced to adults 35 cents, children 25 cents."

Handouts were all in the same vein as the following which was used for nearly every Kansas date: "GREATEST OF SHOWS."

"One of the grandest exhibitions known will amaze and amuse at Wichita on April 17 and 18.

"It is the consensus of public opinion that Bond Brothers'

World's Best Show present the greatest array of high-class Circus and Hippodrome performers ever congregated. The many pleasing innovations and extraordinary first time exhibits commend themselves to an appreciative public, and is conceded the very best best show in America. Every country and climate contribute to its arenic grandeur for popular favor. The Bond Brothers are said to exhibit many rare animals never before seen by an American audience. Its Ethnological congress is of the deepest interest introducing many remarkable specimens for the first time in this country. The performances of the wonderfully educated horses furnish a theme for study and awake a new interest in the noble equine. Newspapers, wherever the mammoth tents have been spread, are eulogistic in praises, and is said to attract the largest assemblages ever seen at a tented show."

The first newspaper advertisement appeared in the *Eagle* on April 4.

"Traveling on its Own Special Trains BOND BROS.' WORLD'S BEST SHOWS The Crowning Climax of Exhibitional Grandeur. Will Exhibit at WICHITA."

The body of the ad stated that, "On account of benefit of the Auditorium, by request of the business public as all the crowd could not attend in one day, will show two days, as above.

"The most Traveled, Popular, Famous, and altogether the Greatest Tented Exhibitions of the Universe. It is infinitely worth more to witness a few of our Marvelous Special Features than it would be to see the Inside and Outside of any other Show in the World.

"ALL NATIONS' GREATEST MALE AND FEMALE CELEBRITIES Colossal Menagerie of Rare Wild Beasts and Ocean's Deep Surprises.

"GRAND MODERN HIP-

BOND BROTHERS' WORLD'S BEST SHOWS

TO THE PUBLIC!

THEir extensive Alliance known as the BOND BROTHERS' WORLD'S BEST SHOWS, owned and managed in person for the past forty years by proprietors whose name is world-wide, denotes it necessary to say a few words concerning their great Amusement Venture, only a portion of which is familiar to the public of Western America. It will be remembered by the failure of the BOND BROTHERS were the leaders and most popular showmen of the Eastern American States. Having in their earlier days been time performers from various foreign countries, and having then frequently that the BOND BROTHERS Show be associated with exhibitions in their countries, it was decided to take the show abroad. The success was so pronounced in Europe, BOND BROTHERS being the first managers to introduce a Menagerie, Hippodrome and Music in conjunction with a Circus, that we sought for other worlds to conquer. As the material could not be located satisfactorily on an ordinary basis, it was deemed advisable to build a vessel expressly for the purpose, and on which the show traveled for many years to all parts of the world. On our return to America, railroad cars were built for the transportation of the entire paraphernalia, and we bring you, without doubt or evil, the World's Best Shows. Respectfully,
J. B. BOND,
C. B. BOND.

THE WHOLE WORLD IN CONTRIBUTION!

THE GREATEST ACCUMULATION OF ZOOLOGICAL MARVELS THAT EVER INTERESTED THE PUBLIC!

PODROME--ENTIRELY NEW AND ORIGINAL FEATS.

"Ethnological Congress of Marvelous, Curious Creation--A Wonderful Sumptuous Carnival. Rare, Rich, Instructive and Unparalleled. Presenting Innumerable Special Features never before Exhibited in America. To see Either of which would be worth a Dozen Admission Fees."

The *Wichita Daily Beacon*, an evening newspaper, reported on April 16 that a baby camel had been born that morning. According to the *Beacon*: "If I had known that event was coming off," said Mr. McMahon, "I would have had 3 or 4 of the best doctors in the town up there to give directions in regard to that baby. If he lives I would not take a small fortune for him and his name will be Wichita. There is nothing dead in connection with Wichita and I will not name him that royal youngster until I am satisfied he is going to live but if he lives his name will be Wichita."

Newspaper ad used by Bond Bros. in 1896. Pfening Archives.

A committee organized for an unidentified purpose was the sponsor for an address on an unidentified subject to be delivered on Friday, Bond Brothers' opening day, by Senator Tillman, an unidentified politician. C. W. Bitting, manager of the Wichita auditorium was concerned that the building might not be able to seat the crowd attracted by Tillman. McMahon volunteered to cancel the concert following the afternoon performance so that Tillman could use the tent. The *Beacon* stated that the auditorium could seat 1,200 to 1,400, but the circus tent could comfortably seat 4,000. Neither the *Beacon* nor the *Eagle* reported on the refusal or acceptance of McMahon's generous offer.

The parade on the 17th attracted a large crowd to Douglas Avenue. The equipment was freshly painted and the

costumes were new. "The animals in the open cages," according to the *Beacon*, "were fine specimens and are all owned by the show. The horses particularly are a fine lot, have been well cared for and come out from their winter quarters with their coats shining like silk."

"Two bands of music kept things lively and the large elephant ridden by a young woman created fun by occasionally taking little side steps toward the crowds that pushed too far into the street."

Another parade was given Saturday morning which the *Beacon* described as "far better than that of yesterday as they had more wagons, horses, people and displays in line. There are more country people in today as the weather is all that could be desired and there is a full tent this afternoon."

"The amount of money coming to the auditorium from the circus was only \$149.40, much less than expected," the *Beacon* reported. "Mr. Bitting sold as many tickets around the city as were sold at the ticket wagon at all their performances. He worked unceasingly to make it a success. The city people did well but the country people's patronage was wanting."

The first road date was St. John, Monday, April 20, despite the St. John County Capital giving the date as Monday, April 25.

The show arrived in St. John early on Sunday morning and the St. John *Weekly News* reported "There was much stealing going on." On the 24th the *News* had much to say about circus day.

"A BAD GANG. The Bond Bros. Circus Composed Of a Gang of Toughs. ROB RIGHT AND LEFT. One of the Toughest Shows That Has Ever Exhibited in This City. Fights Were in Order All Day Between the Circus Men and Police--Chas. Glasscock Badly Hurt."

"The circus has come and gone and the people of this city and surrounding

country can again breath freely and relax the firm grip with which they held their pocket books while the show was in town. The circus came here from Wichita Sunday morning and pitched their tents and gambling dives south of the depot where thieving and robbing ran with a high hand all day Monday. The circus was accompanied by a large gang of toughs and 'shell' workers and criminals of different kinds. They robbed the people [in] nearly every conceivable manner and one man from a certain township who knows says that the citizens of said township alone were fleeced out of over \$250. A warrant was sworn out for one Carl Allen and served by officer Lamoreux. Allen refused to go with the officer and his deputies and the well known circus war whoop, Hey Rube, echoed throughout the tents and roustabout thugs and the entire show management responded with clubs and empty beer bottles. They came down upon the citizens, beating them over their heads with clubs and jumping on them after they were down. Allen escaped during the fight and his whereabouts are not known. County attorney Jennings telegraphed to Gov. Morrill for troops which arrived here about twelve hours after the show had left for Dodge City and the sheriff not having sufficient orders from the governor the Adjutant General refused to go further without special orders. Sheriff Dykes and three deputies went to Dodge and with the sheriff and a posse from Ford county arrested two of the main rioters and brought them back to this city Tuesday evening.

"It is reported to-day that the wounded man, Charles Glasscock, is resting easier and there are faint hopes of his recovery."

In other stories the *News* related that, "Just as John Cullins was starting home from the circus Monday night he was suddenly surrounded by a gang of toughs and ordered to hold and to make it more forcible [they] tapped him on the head with a revolver cutting his right ear very bad. They took John's revolver and tobacco and started him on home. Cullins seems exceedingly well pleased at getting off that easy."

"There was considerable stealing going on last Sunday night by the roustabouts of the show. The principal thing they were after was bed covers, as several blankets were stolen out of carts and buggies belong to farmers who had come to the city to attend church. Ed Cook was the only one who recovered his stolen property, having had a blanket stolen from off his horse while at church. It is reported that a

COMING ON ITS OWN TRAINS

The Most Traveled, Famous and Popular Exhibitions of the Universe!

BOND BROTHERS' WORLD'S BEST SHOWS!



GRAND TRIPLE CIRCUS

Five Continents Represented!

MONSTER MENAGERIE OF RARE WILD ANIMALS

Ethnological Congress of Curious Creation!

EGYPTIAN CARAVAN AND GREAT MODERN HIPPODROME

Presenting many Extraordinary Exhibitional Features never before witnessed by American audiences. To see either of which is infinitely worth more than to see the inside and outside of any other show in the world. The only show on earth having a drove of Performing Elephants. The only show having a troupe of Educated Horses. Two Grand Exhibitions and Performances Daily. Doors open at 1 and 7 P. M.

AT NEENAH,

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14.

"The LaRole brothers in their great trapeze acts was the best in that line ever seen in Dodge City, and the audience was spell bound by the splendid performances of these two brothers. The flying leap from the top of the cross bar was executed with splendid precision and elicited rounds of applause. Arconis, the knife thrower, with his sister, is another feature that is well worth mentioning and shows a remarkable courage and daring, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief when it was over. The contortionists, Messrs. Cunningham, are among the best in their line and do the turning and twisting in a remarkable manner. The tight rope dancer Bichold, is an artist in his line, of which he has few equals. The tumblers were all exceptionally good. The horses are the best trained ever exhibited in Dodge City and their

Bond Brothers advertised exhibitions in Osage City for Saturday, Sep-

[illegible]

Herald used by Bond Bros. World's Best Shows in 1896. Pfening Archives.

marching was done like a company of soldiers.

"The elephants were well trained and

tember 5, but there is no evidence that the date was actually played.

Every show, every season, was always bigger and better than ever before. J. M. Barry's Great American in 1896 was, of course, bigger and better than ever. It had to be, for to be smaller and possibly worse, would have been exceedingly difficult.

The *Carbondalian*, Carbondale, Kansas, on March 14, gave the Great American a grossly inflated image.

"HONEST 'DAD BARRY,' Brief of the Success of J. M. Barry, Known as THE CIRCUS KING. Formerly the Friend of P. T. Barnum And all Celebrated Showmen. The Great American Shows.

"Owned by Mr. Barry--Interesting Facts of Their Quarters at Carbondale.

"Carbondale, Kansas, is the home of J. M. Barry's Great American Circus and Menagerie, one of the best known and most widely popular attraction of its kind that tours the West. Mr. Barry chose Carbondale as his winter quarters because of the equable temperature of this section. He found that the temperature was suitable to the delicate organisms of his menagerie animals, in fact it was health giving.

"He has made this city his winter quarters for years and has never lost an animal, except one lion because of sudden and vigorous weather changes. This fact speaks well for Carbondale.

"The constitutions of animals are like those of humans, where one thrives another will.

"Mr. Barry, the subject of this sketch is one of the oldest and best known showmen in the country. For 25 years he has been identified with the circus business. In the early years of his circus experience he was identified with Barnum & Bailey, Sells Brothers, Wallace, McMahon, Robinson and other celebrities who have gained the pinnacle of fame in the business, who were but then struggling circus followers.

"While not being a Barnum, Mr. Barry has not been left in the race between his old friends and prosperity. They have prospered and so has Mr. Barry who now owns free from debt the entire paraphernalia of the Great American Shows. His pay roll when on the road includes the names of 25 performers and as many more canvasmen and laborers, 45 horses are required for his ring acts and street parades. His bandwagon is [an] expensive, gorgeous affair while his menagerie wagons and dens are but little less striking, all his people are uniformed in neat rich uniforms.

"His tents when ready for business presents almost as imposing appear-

ance as do those of Barnum. His main top which seats 1,500 people and his side show and other tents cover an area of 2 acres. None but the very best people in the circus business are engaged, of course such people demand large salaries and are paid so because Mr. Barry will not tolerate poor performers about him. It's a fact worthy of notice that honest J. M. Barry never in his career has been 'roasted' by the newspapers; wherever he has been he has always been given the highest praise by the press.

"Mr. Barry has thousands of dollars invested in the circus. The gentleman was met by this writer yesterday and he was found to be a wholehearted generous liberal and public spirited man. Of his adopted town of Carbondale he spoke in the highest praise. He is now 59 years, old strong and robust and will one day be a strong competitor of the greatest shows on earth.

"Mr. Barry's daughter, Frankie, who is his bookkeeper and treasurer is one of the best female all around performers in the business, she is a handsome shapely woman and so graceful as a gazelle, to her is due in a measure the wonderful success made by her father as she has a shrewd head and great executive ability. Mr. Barry's show will open in May at Carbondale and make a tour of the west."

On opening day, Saturday, May 9, the *Carbondalian* reported that, "Mr. Barry's performers have been arriving all week. They are all intelligent appearing gentlemen, and the band is exceptionally fine."

Following circus day the *Carbondalian* reported that, "The Great American Shows exhibited here last Saturday to a good audience. They are now showing in Topeka to full tents. The rain and wind this week has somewhat interfered with exhibitions at Overbrook, Scranton and Auburn, but the exhibitions were given to fairly good audiences."

The Overbrook *Herald* reported, "Barry's circus which was here the first part of the week [Monday, May 11] had a poor attendance, but it was a poor show."

"The Great American circus was in town Tuesday [May 12]," according to the Scranton *Gazette*, "and gave two performances to small audiences. The parade in the afternoon con-

sisted of a bandwagon and another wagon containing some women and dogs."

Auburn had no newspaper.

Barry played a three-day stand in Topeka beginning Thursday, May 14, and made no big splash but the weather certainly did. The Topeka *State Journal* reported two inches of rain on the 15th in two hours and the temperature dropped to 55 degrees. On the 16th another severe rain began around ten in the morning flooding the city streets, including the intersection at Fourth and Quincy Streets where the tents were pitched.

The day before the opening the *Daily Democrat* ran two paid mentions of the coming extravaganza.

"Don't forget the day and date of the Great American Show. Topeka May 14, 15, and 16, at the corner of Fourth and Quincy Streets. The biggest show on earth for 10 cents.

"The Big 10c Show. The Great American Show will cast its tents at Fourth and Quincy Sts., Thursday morning, and will give two performances daily, and it is one price to all. 10c."

There are no reports on attendance or the quality of the performances.

"The circus people didn't make much of a haul at Rossville [Tuesday, May 19]," according to the Rossville *Times*.

St. Marys was a two-day stand

This Great American ad appeared in the Summerfield *Sun* on June 5, 1896. Kansas State Historical Society.

Coming! Coming! Coming!

The Biggest Show on Earth for
25 cents will exhibit at

SUMMERFIELD, KANS.

Tuesday, June 9th.

100 PERFORMERS 100

LARGE BANDS OF MUSIC.

TRAINED DOGS AND PONIES.

Don't forget the day and date
of the Great American Show at

SUMMERFIELD, KANS.

Tuesday, June 9th.

Wednesday and Thursday, May 20 and 21.

The St. Marys *Semi-Weekly Eagle* announced on May 15 that, "Coming. Coming. Coming."

"The Great American Show will pitch its tents in St. Marys May 20 and will remain two days, remember. Our price 10c to all."

A reminder on the 19th claimed that, "The only big show this summer is The Great American which will exhibit at St. Marys May 20 and 21. A big show for little money."

The St. Marys *Journal* ran four advertising blurbs nearly identical to the above.

Following the exhibitions the *Eagle* reported that, "The Great American Show exhibited in St. Marys Wednesday and Thursday. Their trapeze and tumbling performances were fairly good as were the trained dogs. The show was as good as could be expected for 10 cents."

The *Journal* also thought that Barry "gave a very fair exhibition for ten cents."

The St. Marys *Star* received none of Barry's lavish advertising budget, but the editor graciously remarked that, "The show last night was well attended. They are giving good performances for the low price of admission."

The Westmoreland *Recorder*, speaking of the exhibitions of May 23, claimed that "A fairly large crowd attended the Great American Show, Saturday afternoon and evening. The show was a slim affair, but as it promised but little in the way of performances, the people should not kick. The parties who run the show seemed to be well-behaved and trustworthy people."

The Onaga *Herald* reported that, "The great American fraud made its appearance in Onaga last Tuesday [May 26], but all the same it caught the usual school of suckers."

The Havensville correspondent for the *Kansas Sunflower*, Holton, was not happy with the Great American. "The show gave a fine street parade on the 27th. It consisted of one wagon, one woman and five dogs. The great American fraud."

In the opinion of the Havensville *Torchlight*, "It is a light waisted concern and didn't get rich here. Altogether, about a hundred people visited the tent and saw a Kansas bull snake and the monkey."

The Great American entertained the people of Holton May 29 and 30. According to the Holton *Recorder*, "The ten cent circus last Friday and Saturday was rather a small affair but

everyone who attended declared that they got ten cents worth of fun. The attendance was fair if the animals were a little scarce and the parade a little slim."

The Holton *Signal* agreed that, "The great American Circus was just what it claimed to be--a ten cent show," and added that three inches of rain fell Saturday night.



The Whiting *Sun*, commenting on the exhibitions of Monday, June 1, presented a mystery when it published that, "Not many of our young men and ladies who attend shows together will ever remain for another concert, after the show. Still, they saw a mild 'concert' compared to what usually goes with shows."

J. M. Barry had a spotless reputation and it is inconceivable that the concert presented anything of questionable morality. Perhaps the *Sun* meant that the concert was of poor quality.

In another column the *Sun* reported that, "The show came and went, and so far as we know not a Whitingite followed it off. They say some of the acting was fair, but as a general thing it was very tame. They seemed to be a tolerable decent set of people for show people, the whole number being 37, from bill poster down to lackey."

Barry played Horton for two days, June 2 and 3, in competition with a two-day Grand Encampment of the IOOF and three days of baseball. The coming of the Great American was announced in the Horton *Commercial* of May 28 by two nickel and dime ads in adjoining columns.

"Remember Miss Frankie Bany (sic) with her troupe of educated dogs and ponies. Show at Horton, June 2d and 3d. Don't miss seeing them work, for they are the best on earth."

Frankie Barry was the talented daughter of J. M. Barry. Nearly all of her life was spent working for her father.

The other minuscule ad proclaimed, "Another Cyclone."

"The Great American Show is taking the people by storm; they all go, for it is

such a big show at cheap prices."

Opening day, June 2, according to the *Commercial*, "was cold enough to wear an overcoat and still a Horton boy ran up and down the streets yelling Ice cream and cake 15 cents."

The *Commercial* concluded that "The Great American was not really what one might expect, but at the same time they had some good performers."

Tuesday was a happy day for one group of patrons. The *Commercial* reported that, "Supt. Wilson, and several of the employees of the Kickapoo Indian boarding school were in the city Tuesday, accompanied by the entire school, forty-five in number, for an outing, and they also took in the show. It required five teams to carry them, and the little ones seemed delighted with their vacation."

A story in no way connected with the Great American appeared in the same column.

"A bill passed the house recently authorizing the payment of \$10,000 to Robert McGee of Excelsior Springs, Mo., who was scalped by a roaming band of Sioux Indians near Walnut Creek station in Kansas in 1864. Mr. McGee at one time resided at Muscotah, and is well known by every old settler in this section of the country. He has traveled many years with a circus, exhibiting himself as the scalped man."

The Great American was poorly patronized at Wetmore on Thursday, June 5. The *Nemaha County Spectator*, Wetmore, described the show as small but "by no means unmeritorious."

The Corning *Gazette*, commenting on the exhibitions of June 5, claimed, "The Great American Circus which struck this town Friday was a pretty fair tent show, but when it comes to calling it a 25 cent show, they aren't in it."

At Centralia, Saturday, June 6, only a few people visited the show.

The Axtell *Anchor* was disturbed by the exhibitions of Monday, June 8.

"The Great American Show has come and gone and left behind it the record of being the bummiest show that ever came to this county. The people that accompanied the show seemed to be all fine people and no fakirs, but for the show there was nothing to it that was worth a cent. The Campbell Bros. 10 cent show that was here several weeks ago was a much better entertainment. Even the Mohawks [medicine show] had a better entertainment. The time has come when such snide shows should get the

shake and a cold one at that."

In addition to three small items in the news columns the *Summerfield Sun* on June 5 carried the only traditional advertisement that Barry used in Kansas.

It was not really the "Biggest Show on Earth," but the *Sun* claimed, "They are as good as the average wagon shows, and have a nice lot of people with them. They drew a much larger crowd to town than we anticipated."

Barry tried unsuccessfully to buy Jim Ryan's big-footed dog. The dog is "only 6 months old and has feet as big as Jim himself. Besides, they are web feet."

In conclusion of its report on circus day, the *Sun* remarked that, "Barry, the circus man, treats newspaper people all right."

"It was a rather schlim (sic) affair," the *Bern Press* reported following the exhibitions there on Wednesday, June 10, "but some were pleased with a few of the performances. It is conceded that the dogs did well."

The spring of 1896 in Kansas brought tremendous rains, unpleasantly cold temperatures and numerous small tornadoes one of which did considerable damage to the small town of Sabetha.

"The Great American Circus will exhibit at this place on Thursday, June 11," the *Sabetha Star* announced, "and one fourth of the gross proceeds will be given for the benefit of the cyclone sufferers of this city."

Following circus day, the *Star* reported that, "We understand that the gross receipts of the circus were \$75, one-fourth of which was given to the cyclone sufferers."

Considering the resources of J. M. Barry his gift of \$18.75 was, indeed, an impressive gesture.

Early in June an employee of Barry returned to Carbondale with a report that due to the wet weather the show was not doing as well as expected.

On July 4 the *Carbondalian* ran a story picked up from the *Nebraska City Daily Press*. "The Great American ten cent show under the able management of J. Barry, gave two very creditable performances at this city yesterday. Over 1,900 people witnessed the show which would be cheap at three times the price. Miss Frankie Barry's troupe of trained dogs alone being worth the price of admission. The Gila monster in the side show attracted crowds of people and is something wonderful to look at."

The season of 1896 in Kansas was a slim one. The times were bad and the weather abominable. The success of J. M. Barry's Great American Circus can

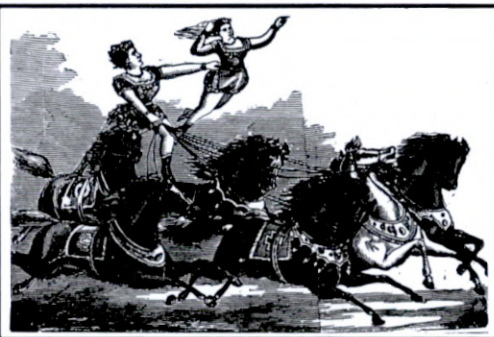
be judged from the fact that the show was back in winter quarters a mile and a half east of Carbondale by September 19. Barry reported a "fairly successful season."

In 1896 the Great American is known to have played the following towns: May 9, Carbondale, Opener; May 11, Overbrook; May 12, Scranton; May 13, Auburn; May 14, 15, 16, Topeka; May 19, Rossville; May 20, 21, St. Marys; May 22, Louisville; May 23, Westmorland; May 26, Onaga; May 27, Havensville; May 28, Soldier; May 29, 30, Holton; June 1; Whiting; June 2, 3, Horton; June 4, Wetmore; June 5, Corning; June 6, Centralia; June 8, Axtell; June 9, Summerfield; June 10, Bern; June 11, Sabetha; September 19, Carbondale, (winter quarters, no exhibitions).

Barry's Great American in spite of the boast of being the biggest show on earth was very small, but it was not the smallest show tramping through Kansas in 1896.

There were at least two nameless shows that were even smaller. The *Almena Kansas Plaindealer*, May 21, reported, "We understand that a snide show is to fleece the suckers at Norton some time during the coming month. We understand that the menagerie consists of two dogs and several jack asses (besides those who attend) and that the performance consists principally of the manipulations of the nut shells. Those who attend will doubtless be greatly disappointed."

The following week the *Plaindealer* stated that "two drays and four pack mules convey the monstrous show which is to stop at Norton about the 15th of June."



The *Effingham New Leaf* on June 12 carried the following: "A small sized circus hit town Wednesday [June 10] and played two nights, one of the boy performers is subject to fits and had seven in rapid succession Thursday morning. He was sent to his home on the 1:18 passenger. The show is about the size of the stationary they post up."

The *Nortonville News*, June 12, re-

marked that, "There was a one horse show in town two days this week."

On June 11 the *Everest Enterprise* announced "There will be a one horse circus in Everest Saturday [June 13]."

It is probable that the same show played Effingham, Nortonville and Everest.

No comments regarding the performances in any of the towns appeared in the press, and no performers were named.

The *Topeka State Journal*, June 4, carried the following: "Karl White and 20 other Topeka people will start out tomorrow with a dog and pony show."

"The show has three special cars, 30 Shetland ponies, 20 work horses and 8 ring horses. It will go first to Kansas City, where it opens Monday [June 8] for three days. Atchison, Leavenworth and Holton will then be visited, and the show will, after exhibiting in Missouri strike for the Pacific coast."

"Prof. White will not exhibit in Topeka because the license is too high."

"There are 40 people with the circus altogether. There is a band of a dozen Topeka people. White has performers from LaPearl's and other circuses, and has been in the business himself for years. He was with Forepaugh's circus at one time."

Nothing more about Karl White or his dog and pony show was reported in the Kansas press. There are no reports confirming exhibitions in any of the towns mentioned above.

F. J. Gentry & Co's. Worlds Greatest Dog and Pony Show opened the season of 1896 in Wichita, Kansas, where it had spent the winter in a large brick building on South Washington Avenue. The first word of the opening was a handout on April 25 in the *Wichita Mirror*. "A WONDERFUL EXHIBITION."

"There will be one of the best entertainments ever before the public in this city. The trained dogs and ponies are simply marvels. There are varied acts in which these educated dogs and ponies perform feats never attempted before the public. There are dog acrobats, aerialists, leapers and clowns in hundreds of marvelous feats. It seems that these trained animals can do everything but talk, and one wonders how such things can be accomplished. It is really phenomenal. There are some sixteen fine specimens of horseflesh. They dance jigs, do sums in arithmetic, brush clothes, ring bells, smoke pipes, go a fishing, go through a military drill and fight a battle. The dogs give an illustration of the conviction and punishment of a crime. A

thief is detected, tried, convicted and hanged. Many other equally wonderful exhibitions of intelligence are gone through with. This splendid exhibition will show in Wichita on April 30, and May 1st and 2nd. Each day at twelve o'clock there will be a grand street parade with handsome vehicles, ponies, horses and dogs to excel anything of a similar kind ever seen."

A handout in the *Daily Beacon* reported that, "They have 52 performing dogs and 15 performing ponies besides 'Nick' the Shetland clown pony and 'Peck's Bad Boy' which is a mule, but a wise one."

"They have an Arabian horse that is the ideal of the finest thing in horse-flesh. Strange as it may appear many of the most intelligent performers are Oregon bronchoes, all bearing the marks of the ranch brand."

A one-column advertisement appeared in the *Beacon* on April 28.

"THE F. J. GENTRY & CO'S World's Greatest DOG AND PONY SHOW--Corner Market and William Streets. 3--DAYS--3. Commencing APRIL 30. Matinees Friday and Saturday. [Cut of Horses Armed with Cannons] 50 Wonderfully Educated Dogs In their many varied acts never before attempted, demonstrating the degree of perfection that may be attained in animal training through kindness, gentleness and love. The most pleasing, interesting and instructive exhibition ever offered to the public. [Cut of Dead Horses in Front of Fort] 25 Humanely Educated Horses and Ponies. Endorsed by the thousands of delighted visitors as the largest and most complete Equine and Canine Paradox ever organized in this or any other country. ADMISSION Children under 12 years . . . 10c Adults . . . 20c. Watch for the GRAND STREET PARADE At 12 Noon, Each Day."

The opening exhibition was announced as a benefit for the Wichita Auditorium, but the press failed to report the donated sum.

The *Newton Kansan* reported after the exhibitions of Monday and Tuesday, May 4 and 5, that it "certainly was a wonderful thing. The show has traveled heretofore through this state exhibiting in Opera houses. The stages were too small, however, for the proper exhibition of the horses and the tent has been adopted. The tent was packed at every performance."

The *Emporia Daily Republican* carried a handout giving the seating capacity of the tent as "about 3,000." The lot was on Commercial Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues. An evening performance was given on May 6, but on the 7th a matinee and an eve-

F. J. GENTRY & CO'S
World's Greatest:
DOG AND PONY SHOWS!
Commercial St., Between 7th and 8th,
2 DAYS Commencing **MAY 6th.**
Wednesday,
Afternoon Performance Thursday.
50 Most Wonderfully Educated Dogs 50
In their many varied acts never before attempted, demonstrating the degree of perfection that may be attained in animal training, by kindness, gentleness and love.



25---Humanly Educated Horses and Ponies---25
The most pleasing, interesting and instructive exhibition ever offered to the public. Endorsed by thousands of delighted visitors as the largest and most complete Equine and Canine Paradox ever organized in this or any other country.

This Gentry ad appeared in the May 1, 1896 *Emporia Daily Republican*. Kansas State Historical Society.

ning exhibition was presented. Parades were given both days but not before 12 o'clock so that school children would have a chance to see. Doors opened at 3:30 for matinees and the performance began at four.

The *Republican* reported that, "F. J. Gentry & Co's., dog and pony shows were given in his city last evening. Their large tent was crowded to standing room by the admirers of the equine and canine performances. The large canvass is arranged in circus style and can accommodate two or three thousand people with comfortable seats. The performance by the trained ponies and dogs is one of the best of the kind ever given in the city. The horse that can add, the military drill and the battle scene are the most remarkable feats performed by horses. Some persons remarked that 'the ponies had more sense than half the people,' and the truth was impressed as their show continued. The dogs were on a par with the ponies and performed many new and marvelous tricks. The Casey family, the old man, the old woman and 'little kid,' was the special feature which was heartily enjoyed by all, and showed the utmost care and training by their owner."

"Taken as a whole, the show is in the true sense of the word, an 'equine and canine paradox.'

"A matinee is in progress this afternoon and is being witnessed by 2,000 people."

The parade on the 7th appeared at three o'clock, and according to the *Emporia Gazette*, "The team of little Shetland ponies which headed the procession were once driven sixty-five miles in a day by Mr. Gentry."

When the show moved on Fred Oliphant of Emporia went with it.

Professor Gentry entertained Topeka on May 8 and 9 in his tents pitched on Quincy Street between and Fourth and Fifth Streets. The Topeka stand was reported briefly in the *Topeka State Journal*.

"The big tent near Fourth and Quincy was well filled last night by little tots and their chaperones to witness the dog and horse (sic) show of F. J. Gentry."

"The acting of the dogs gave unbounded satisfaction, the clown, of course, achieving the honors. The hounds did some wonderful high and long distance leaping."

"The trick donkey was a feature, and the horse that knew colors and could count was enjoyed enormously."

The show moved on for a week's run in Kansas City, Missouri.

The various Gentry shows were favorites of Topeka's show patrons and played more dates in Topeka than any other aggregation, appearing 16 times.

The Great Wallace Shows in 1896 made a lengthy tour of the nation opening in Peru, Indiana on April 18 and closing at Rosedale, Mississippi, on December 5. In between the above dates Wallace traveled 19,280 miles. Considerable mileage was wracked up in Kansas in a very short time.

Wallace moved 668 miles on the Santa Fe from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Pueblo, Colorado, 454 miles across Kansas, stopping for only two dates, Friday, May 1, Osage City, and Saturday, May 2, Hutchinson. The next jump was a Sunday run of 386 miles from Hutchinson to Pueblo.

Advertising in the *Osage City Free Press* modestly claimed that The Great Wallace Shows were, "lofty in conception, splendid in organization, regal in equipment, ideal in character, omnipotent in strength, the most moral, the purest, cleanest, mightiest and most magnificent amusement triumph of the nineteenth century."

In addition the ad acknowledged that The Great Wallace Shows was, "The greatest, the largest and the best of America's big amusement enterprises."

It was, also, "THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD."

In support of the above the ad listed the following "facts": "Honorably conducted, honestly advertised. Three rings, 2 stages. 1/2 mile race track, colossal menagerie, royal aquarium, museum, 1,000 features, 100 phenomenal acts, 20 hurricane races, 25 clowns, 4 trains, 10 acres of canvas, 20,000 seats, 1,000 employees, \$4,000 daily expenses, 6 bands, 50 cages, 15 open dens, a herd of elephants, a drove of camels, the world ransacked for famous performers, and the finest horses of any show on earth, \$3,000,000 capital—it has been necessary to employ this enormous sum to equip and organize what we believe to be the finest and completest circus ever placed before the people of North America, our aim being to maintain it in its proud position—THE BEST SHOW ON EARTH."

The ad was illustrated by a cut of an equestrian bear.

"The old, the stale and commonplace," the ad continued, "have no part here, with modern and thoroughly up to date ideas, our patrons witness only the new, the novel and sensational. Feats of skill, grace and daring by the most eminent artists of the old world and the new. A complete and refreshing departure from the entertainments afforded by any other show traveling. We are the only exponents of the new circus and are the first to break away from old methods, old ideas, old acts, old people and old features."

The only performer mentioned was "RALSTON, the High Diver, whose feat of leaping from the Washington Monument (555 feet) [is] unparalleled. Gives a FREE EXHIBITION DAILY!"

The parade was described as "a monster spectacular exhibition, a triumph of money, good taste and art, beautiful women, beautiful horses, beautiful costumes. A veritable sunburst of splendor. No other show on earth could afford such a display."

Considering all of the above, it was pure arrogance that stated, "We have a cumulative and comprehensive contempt for the old fashioned circus advertiser who flounders around in a mass of verbiage, bragging and lying about his attractions and unable to

COMING! COMING! TO OSAGE CITY, FRIDAY, MAY 1

The greatest, grandest, the largest and the best of America's big amusement enterprises.

THE GREAT WALLACE SHOWS

Lady in conception, splendid in organization, regal in equipment, ideal in character, omnipotent in strength, the most moral, the purest, cleanest, mightiest and most magnificent amusement triumph of the nineteenth century.

THE EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD!

Honorably conducted, honestly advertised. Three rings, 2 stages. 1/2 mile race track, colossal menagerie, royal aquarium, museum 1,000 features, 100 phenomenal acts. 20 hurricane races, 25 clowns, 4 trains, 10 acres of canvas, 20,000 seats, 1,500 employees, \$4,000 daily expenses, 6 bands, 50 cages, 15 open dens, a herd of elephants, a drove of camels, the world ransacked for famous performers, and the finest horses of any show on earth. \$3,000,000 capital—it has been necessary to employ this enormous sum to equip and organize what we believe to be the finest and completest circus ever placed before the people of North America, our aim being to maintain it in its proud position—THE BEST SHOW ON EARTH!

OUR MENAGERIE Comprises the noblest specimens procurable of all strange animals, noted for their beauty, scarcity or ferocity. Every clim and every continent is represented and a liberal education in zoology can be acquired in one examination of our vast collection of mammalian, avian, simian, amphibian, ornithological and reptilian wonders.

OUR HIPPODROME RACES Are the greatest ever witnessed under canvas. A fortune expended in thoroughbred race horses enables us to reproduce the imposing scenes of the famous Coliseum. Scenes of wild and tumultuous excitement which evoked the plaudits of the Caesars who ruled Rome when old Rome "sat on her seven hills and from her throne of beauty ruled the world." No show on earth has ever provided such an entertainment for its patrons.

OUR STREET PARADE Given at 10 a. m. daily, is a monster spectacular exhibition, a triumph of money, good taste and art, beautiful women, beautiful horses, beautiful costumes. A veritable sunburst of splendor. No other show on earth could afford such a display. We have a cumulative and comprehensive contempt for the old fashioned circus advertiser who flounders around in a mass of verbiage bragging and lying about his attractions and unable to make one statement good with his show. We wish to say that our parade is the greatest and the resources of this one, and as it costs you nothing to see it, come and bring your family and witness if we have lied.

This Great Wallace ad appeared in the Osage City Free Press on April 16, 1896. Kansas State Historical Society.

make one statement good with his show."

Heaven forbid that Ben Wallace should ever deceive the public!

If it were not for the misfortune of F. M. Shuck whose buggy over turned on the show ground causing considerable injury to the driver, there would be no evidence that Osage City ever saw the Wallace show.

The Hutchinson date was totally ignored after circus day.

Lemen Brothers' New Colossal Shows opened the season of 1896 on Saturday, May 2, in its home town of Argentine, Kansas.

The main feature was once again Rajah, "The Largest Elephant that walks the Earth, 2 inches Taller and 3 Thousand lbs Heavier than Jumbo."

An ad in the Argentine Republic described Rajah as "The Biggest Brute on Earth! The Biggest Born of Brutes! The Biggest Feature Yet!" By all accounts Rajah was a monstrosly huge animal.

Other advertised features were "The only Boxing Kangaroo in the World," and "The only White Sea Lions on exhibition in the World."

There are no reports of opening day, but the Republic remarked that, "Lemen Bros.' circus left Sunday [May 3] for the

next stand at Brunswick, Missouri."

An advertisement in the Weekly Champion and the publication of two handouts, August 3, are the total reportage for the exhibitions at Atchison, Wednesday, August 19. Nothing was reported after the show had come and gone.

Leavenworth was billed for Saturday, August 29, but the date was blown. The following explanation appeared in the Leavenworth Standard, August 29: "RAIN, BUT NO SHOW. Lemen Bros' Show Meets Its 'Jonah' and Does Not Unload. IT PULLS OUT FOR WINTER QUARTERS. An Attachment For a Large Sum Said to Have Been Run on the Circus Outfit Nebraska City—When This Show Comes Here Rain Comes Too."

"Lemen Bros. show

was billed to exhibit in this city today, but the rain that set in early this morning and continued till in the afternoon helped to prevent the show from doing any local business. The crowd in town today is not large, consequently the number of disappointed people is not great.

"When Lemen Bros. come to Leavenworth they almost invariably bring a rain storm with them, at any rate it rains on that day. This has occurred annually for the last five years with one exception, when it rained furiously on the day before. On two or three visits the show was not unloaded; and the same rule was followed today.

"The show arrived early this morning from Nebraska City, and after waiting in the railway yards a couple of hours moved on to Kansas City, Kas., or Argentine. It is said the show will be reorganized at Argentine, but whether it will go on the road again this summer is not known here. There is a possibility, it is said, that the show will remain at winter quarters in Argentine till next season.

"Lemen Bros. consider that they are carrying too much show for the admission price, 25 cents, and propose to cut it down in some respect so as to reduce the daily cost of running it. They also say business in the show line has been unusually 'rocky' and discouraging this season. There seems to be a scarcity of money, particularly for amuse-



ment purposes, and shows of all character are feeling the effects of the stringency.

"Lemen Bros. squared up their accounts in Leavenworth without a word, which shows they meant to do the right thing, even if they do lose money. The show did not pull out this morning until after all local bills had been settled.

"It was stated this afternoon that the Strobridge Lithograph company attached the circus at Nebraska City and that an officer accompanied the outfit to this city. This is said to have been one reason why the circus did not pitch its tents in this city. The attachment, it seems, is for advertising paper furnished Lemen Bros. and is for a large sum."

Cullin Brothers show in 1896 had slim pickings on its Kansas tour. The first discovered dates for the circus were Friday and Saturday, May 29 and 30, Decoration day, at the cross-roads village of Meriden. The Grand Army of the Republic was at its pinnacle and the veterans were not hesitant to use their muscle to save Decoration day from desecration.

The Meriden *Ledger* reported, "When it became known that Prof. E. Rush intended to make a balloon ascension and Cullins Bros. give a show in Meriden on Decoration Day, the old soldiers became quite exorcised over the apparent desecration of the day for amusement and the following was presented to the council: 'To the Mayor and Honorable Council of the City of Meriden, Kan:

"WHEREAS, It is proposed and advertised by Cullins Bros. to desecrate the day set apart for the commemoration of the memory of the old soldiers by giving within the city a balloon ascension and a show, and

"WHEREAS, we believe that this day should be kept purified from anything sacrilegious to the real objects of Memorial Day which should be esteemed as a "Holy day" instead of a "holiday," in the proper and true spirit

Cullin Bros. Circus parade on a lot in 1896. Two bandwagons and some pony cages can be seen. Pfening Archives.

of loyalty and devotion to our country and the sacred memory of the "noble boys in blue" who fell in defense of the Union.

"THEREFORE, the Grand Army Post of Meriden, No. 160, hereby respectfully petition your honorable body to call a special session of the City Council and forbid any such entertainments for amusement on Decoration Day. W. F. TUDOR, Commander, GEO. TAYLOR, Adjutant."

The Council accordingly met in special session Tuesday evening. Believing that since the Nation had set apart the day for the specific purpose of honoring the soldier dead, the city has no legal right to license amusements for that day any more than for a Sunday, on motion the amusements were prohibited."

Cullin Bros., according to the *Ledger*, was not easily intimidated.

"Cullin Bros. notwithstanding the city council refused to issue them a license to give their show on Decoration Day, gave a balloon ascension in the afternoon and a performance in the evening. No admission was charged at the door and therefore was not subject to our license laws, but those who desired to sit down had to pay for their seats. The balloon ascension was a success. Prof. E. Rush, the aeronaut, rose about 2,000 feet when he cut loose and made a beautiful parachute jump coming down safely amid the applause of many spectators. Sixteen dollars were contributed by citizens for this sight."

The route of Cullin Brothers is difficult to follow and reports are all but non existent. All that the *Muscotah Record* had to say was, "Cullin Bros." show was in Wednesday [June 3]. They gave a very good show."

According to the Meriden *Tribune*, "Cullin Bros. Show was very well attended Tuesday evening [June 9], and was well worth the price of admission. This is their third visit to Meriden and

should they ever happen this way again they will be welcomed by many." The above was quoted in the *Huron Weekly News*, June 13.

Cullin Bros. exhibited in Huron on an unknown date in June. All that is known of the performance is the following account reported in the *Huron Weekly News*:

"Cullin Bros. Specialty co. (sic) treated Huron citizens to an interesting Show of about three hours duration. The Programme opened with an old fashioned school in which Lew Cullins, as teacher, caused no little laughter. The Serpentine dance of Miss Green was next in order and was well worth the price of admission. Nelson & Cullins in their musical acts were quite interesting and pleased all. Lew and Ben Cullins acrobatic feats were up to the mark. Ben as clown made considerable fun. The song, 'Sucking cider through a straw' was one among the best on the program. Many local hits were appreciated by the audience. Taken as a whole the entertainment was grand, well worth the admission. Should they visit Huron at some future date they will be well patronized."

The *Kansas Wheel*, Denton, reported, "The Cullin Bros. gave a small show here Monday night [June 15]. They had a poor house and the show was ditto."

The only reference for Robinson was a brief note reminding the citizens to "Attend the Cullins Brothers circus today [Friday, June 19]."

The *White Cloud Globe*, reporting the exhibitions of Wednesday, June 24, stated that, "Cullins Bros. show was here last week and played in hard luck, as they did not take in enough money to pay their license. They were nearly drowned out Wednesday by the rain which covered the flat below the school house."

The accounts fail to make it clear whether the name was "Cullins" or "Cullin."

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera & Video, Inc., Topeka, Kansas.

Circus Life and Adventure of ADAM BARDY



A Connecticut magazine recently wrote this about Adam Bardy's book:

"If you're still a kid at heart when the circus comes to town, you'll love Adam Bardy's life story of his adventures of circus life. Adam Bardy was born in Webster on May 21, 1907. Back in 1907 thousands of immigrants from Europe kept coming to America.

"Bardy's life might be compared somewhat to Mark Twain's boyhood heroes Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and back in 1907 in June, Mark Twain met George Bernard Shaw in London. It was a rainy Saturday when the Buffalo Bill Circus came to Webster. Adam Bardy was only 8 years old when he crawled into a circus wagon that night. However on Sunday morning when he crawled out of his hiding place, he wanted to get back home. Bardy had to have a guardian angel as he got back home before he was missed.

"In 1924 Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Circus played in Worcester. Bardy's interest in the circus was renewed and he got a job with the side show. The circus liked getting young men to join them because it was out of young people that real circus troupers were made.

"Bardy found that circus life in the roaring twenties was rough and tough. On sunny days it was wonderful, but on rainy days you went to bed in the circus cars with wet clothes, and you would have to wait for a sunny day to dry out. If you could put in a full circus season under these conditions, you would be called a real trooper. In the twenties Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey was a railroad circus. It traveled in four sections. The first section was the cookhouse crew along with some circus wagons that carried the cookhouse. The second section carried most of the circus wagons and the stock cars full of work horses and nearly all the working crew. The third section carried the wild animal cages. There were 43 elephants with the circus.

"One of our heroes was Tom Mix and on Saturday afternoon when the local movie theater featured westerns. Tom Mix and his wonder horse Tony was a favorite of young and old movie fans. We recall that Tom Mix was with the Sells Floto Circus and we were invited to attend the circus and see Mix in person in Willimantic. Adam Bardy was working with the Sells-Floto Circus at the time and knew Mix very well. There were more circuses in business in the twenties than there are now. Hagenback and Wallace, John Robinson, Al G. Barnes, Sparks and Walter L. Main were some of the big ones.

"Few folks realized that Tom Mix was at one time a real sheriff, a Deputy U.S. Marshall, a Texas Ranger, a real cow puncher and ranch foreman. He was even Roughrider under Teddy Roosevelt. For Bardy to personally know and work with Mix was one of the truly great thrills of his wonderful life. Mix was one of the truly greats of the silent movies.

"Adam Bardy at the age of 86 can look back at his many adventurous experiences in the circus, life with Gypsies, fortune telling, bootlegging, marriages, and finding love and happiness.

"He has written a book The Circus Life and Adventure of Adam Bardy. This book would have made a wonderful movie with enough wholesome family desires of an eight year old "running away" for a day; joining the circus and becoming a boss canvasman and having his crew set up the big circus tent while still a teen-ager. Fortune telling, boxing, bootlegging, and after four score years becoming a successful author. With the right promotional agency, the life and adventures of Adam Bardy could be made into a television series that might parallel the Untouchables and Little House on the Prairie. Many men desire the anonymity of Mister X but Adam Bardy is a real Mr. X . . . Ex-Circus Man, Ex-Pugilist, Ex-Still Operator, Ex-Bootlegger, Ex-Fortune Teller, and an excellent author."

The book includes many pictures that tell the life story of Adam. For an autographed copy of Circus Life and Adventure of Adam Bardy, send check or money order for \$12.95 to:

ADAM BARDY
87 Alm Rd.
Thompson, CT 06277

**SPECIAL HOLIDAY GREETINGS TO
DON MARCKS**

Who single handedly somehow keeps the circus world
informed every week by publishing

CIRCUS REPORT

From all of your readers and advertisers.



We're Reliving History at the



3 miles east of Peru, Indiana, on State Road 124



1995 Was Our Best Year Ever!
And we owe it all to our friends and fans.
We're on our way to making 1996
and the future even better!

- For the third year our Museum was open from May through October
- For the first time, we had a 10-week performance season with two shows daily from June 24 through Labor Day
- We started refurbishing the 1922 Cat Animal Barn
- We're restoring the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Ticket Wagon (No. 124)
- We restored and repainted the clown sign that was mounted atop the ticket wagon in the 1950's

This puts us in the holiday spirit, so we wish you

All the best during the Holiday Season
and for all of the New Year!

Help us continue to make Circus history
come alive by becoming a member of the

International Circus Hall of Fame

Send your check, made out to Circus Hall of Fame, and the information below to:

Circus Hall of Fame
P.O. Box 700
Peru, IN 46970

Our telephone number is (317) 472-7553

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone number _____

Life Membership (\$250) _____ Annual Contributing Membership (\$100) _____

Family Life Membership (\$500) _____ Sustaining Membership (\$50) _____

Annual Contributing Membership (\$100) _____ Annual Individual (\$10) _____

Annual Family Membership (\$25) _____

**Merry Christmas &
A Happy New Year!**



Kenneth Feld presents
SIEGFRIED & ROY
AT THE MIRAGE

LAS VEGAS

Mike Martin's CIRCUS HOBBY HALL

Rare and Unusual Gift Items

Side Show Giant's Rings

Jack Earl, the 8' 6½" "Human Skyscraper", was a featured attraction with the Ringling circus in the 1930's.

More than a curiosity, this tall Texan was an accomplished artist and presented a very popular "One Man Show" of his paintings in New York.

Luckily, we've located a limited number of his heavy metal souvenir rings from the 30's. Extremely rare, in absolute MINT CONDITION, they are highly detailed with large, raised letters. Each - Postpaid - \$24.50



1955 R/B Programs

40 years ago, John Ringling North produced one of his best and most well remembered shows for the '55 season.

Here are the Programs, loaded with photos and packed with stories, for that last full season under canvas. Take a nostalgic trip back to the days of Pinito Del Oro, Unus, Justino Loyal, Miss Mara, Alexander Konyot, Josephine Berosini and countless others.

Fondly recall some of the greatest performers ever - with "The Greatest Show on Earth"!
While Supplies Last - Postpaid \$8.50

Letterhead Packages

12 Original Circus Stationery Sheets in Gorgeous Full Color!
Package includes:

Beatty-Cole	RB Circus World
Toby Tyler	RB Monte Carlo
Ringling/Barnum	A Dozen in All!

\$10.50 Per Package Postpaid

1936 Circus/Carnival Magazine

Here's another real find! This 68 page gem is loaded with detailed information on over two dozen Circus, Carnival and Wild West shows touring in 1936. Photo illustrated with routes, equipment and show performances covered. Shows include:

Seils-Sterling	Lunsford Wild West
Rubin and Cherry	and many others

MINT COPIES! LIMITED SUPPLY POSTPAID \$15.50

1945 R/B Route Books

Celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of "The Greatest Show on Earth". From 50 years ago, these photo and story-filled books are loaded with nostalgia and historical information.

Each book contains the program of the '45 performance, list of personnel, a day-by-day diary, feature stories by Bev Kelley and the complete routes of the Barnum show 1871 - 1918.

MINT COPIES - LIMITED SUPPLY - Postpaid \$ 16.50

Royal American Booklet

Last call on these! We found a few more copies of this photo illustrated, 16 page, 8½" x 11" publicity magazine from this mammoth carnival's heyday!

Each - Postpaid - \$11.50



All orders in the Continental U.S. & Canada Postpaid. Europe & the rest of the world please add \$10.00 per order. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks for delivery.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

Mike Martin

Dept. BW - 16840 S.W. 62 St.
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33331
Fla. residents add 6% Sales tax

KENNETH FELD
PRESENTS

RINGLING BROS. AND BARNUM & BAILEY

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

BROUGHT TO YOU BY
SEARS



Holiday Greetings!

From The All-New 126th Edition Of
THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH!®